

food

TOP CHEFS, TASTY RECIPES, TASTE-BUD BLISS

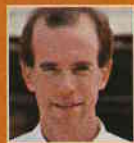
Ripe F

The dead of winter isn't when most people think to run out to the farmers market for fresh ingredients. But just because February's vegetables (like turnips and beets) aren't as lush, green and traditionally beautiful as summertime's crops doesn't mean you should overlook them. "People don't realize there's so much produce available this time of year," says Alex Paffenroth, a Warwick, N.Y., farmer who can be found selling the vegetables shown here on Saturdays at the Union Square Greenmarket. "Celery root is extremely popular this year. It's perfect in soups and stews. Not to mention, it's the best time for sunchokes." Unsure how to incorporate these vegetables into your meals? Five top New York chefs (below) show you how.

—Annemarie Conte



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Chef and owner, The Queen's Hideaway
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CHIOGGIA BEETS

ALEXANDRA:

"Beets are like the girl who's got it all—brains, brawn, beauty. The flavor is sweet without being cloying. I love to mix them with roasted nuts or a nice, salty cheese. They blend well with fatty flavors."

BILL:

"You have to cook beets for the sweetness to come out. Slice four large ones thin, add red onion slices and marinate all in a bowl with red wine vinegar and extra-virgin olive oil to taste. That salad can sit for days in your fridge."

LIZA:

"I make a Niçoise smoked trout salad with a side of sweet beets, black radishes and arugula. The beets add such a lusciousness."

COLIN:

"Juice beets to lighten up heavy winter dishes and make them zingy—like if you cook your sunchokes for a long time, run them through a food mill and add half a cup of beet juice with a little bit of ginger. It's delicious."

DAN:

"Wrap the beets really tight in foil, put them in the oven on the highest heat possible until they're caramelized, and you can retain the sugar. They have an incredible sweetness."



SUNCHOKES (JERUSALEM ARTICHOKES)

LIZA:

"Slice sunchokes really thin and sauté like home fries. They have an earthy, nutty flavor and are great with fish, eggs or hard cheeses."

COLIN:

"Use a green scrub pad to score the skin, then slowly roast the sunchokes whole with olive oil, garlic, rosemary and dried chili. They're also really good raw, in salads."

ALEXANDRA:

"Sauté sunchokes until tender and mix with fresh grapes. They make a great snack."

BILL:

"I recently threw some in the oven with a pork roast that had about 40 minutes left. (The key is to turn the sunchokes after 20 minutes.) They absorbed so much of the juice and the fat, and were so unbelievable that I took a picture."

DAN:

"Roast sunchokes in a pan with olive oil and stick them in a cast-iron skillet and bake at 400°. They can't really be overcooked. The more they cook, the sweeter they become."

Right Now

New York chefs reveal how to make the most of winter's freshest ingredients.



CELERIAC

LIZA:

"Texture-wise, celeriac falls somewhere in between jicama and water chestnut, and it has a bright, peppery flavor. It's great chopped up raw or with smoked trout."

ALEXANDRA:

"This is one of the greatest vegetables. Steam it and toss it into a salad or make it into a puree. I also love it shaved raw and drizzled with truffle oil."

COLIN:

"Rinse it off, rub it with oil, salt

it, pack in some thyme or sage, wrap it in foil and stick it in the oven until it's soft."

BILL:

"Celeriac goes really well, whether raw or cooked, with mushrooms or black truffles."

DAN:

"I like celeriac raw, cut paper-thin with a slicer and then marinated in oil and sherry wine vinegar. Dress it with a lemon vinaigrette and a little bit of mustard. Yum."



PURPLE-TOP TURNIPS

ALEXANDRA:

"Braise the turnips until fork-tender with a little butter, brown sugar and browned allspice. They are really nutty and delicious. It's the perfect side dish to poultry, like seared duck breast with a nice, crispy skin."

COLIN:

"Mashed turnips with butter is a classic English dish. They'll hold their shape better than mashed potatoes, even if you cook the bejesus out of them. And turnips in soups are sort of cabbage-y and add a nice bite."

BILL:

"To draw the sweetness out of turnips, cut

them in half and add a pinch of salt. Melt a little butter and stew them with bacon, apples and a little cider vinegar until they're tender. I love them this way—they burst in your mouth with sweetness."

DAN:

"Braise turnips in vegetable stock or water, salt, pepper and a pinch of sugar. I serve them in the restaurant with wild striped bass."

LIZA:

"Broil carrots and turnips until they're tender, mash them, add cream and caramelized onions with butter, salt and pepper. It's a great accompaniment to any entrée."

TROPEA ONIONS

LIZA:

"Blanch the onions and cover them with any stock you want, then add fresh beans and maybe some ham and kale. Put a piece of toast covered in melted cheddar in the bottom of a bowl and pour the soup over it. Really good."

ALEXANDRA:

"The skin is delicious and can impart a lot of flavor. I roast a whole batch of onions and just suck them straight out of their skins, or take a bunch and throw them over a pork chop with a little vinegar."

COLIN:

"Split the onions in half, salt a pan and put them, cut-side down, on the salt for 15 minutes. Brush the skins with butter and put the onions in the oven. The skins will help keep the moisture in and create a really soft texture and a sweet, creamy flavor."

DAN:

"Buy them from Alex Paffenroth at the Union Square Greenmarket. He has the sweetest onions, because of the high sugar content in Warwick, N.Y."

BILL:

"Roast tropeas whole with melted butter. When they're lightly caramelized, drain out the butter, add a pinch of salt and cover with foil. Set aside on the counter until onions are soft. Then throw it on any kind of roast."