



How to select and prepare Fennel

Selecting:

Good quality fennel will have bulbs that are clean, firm and solid, without signs of splitting, bruising or spotting. The bulbs should be whitish or pale green in color. The stalks should be relatively straight and closely packed around the bulb and should not splay out to the sides too much. Both the stalks and the leaves should be green in color. There should be no signs of flowering buds as this indicates that the vegetable is past maturity. Fresh fennel should have a fragrant aroma, smelling subtly of licorice or anise. Fennel is usually available from autumn through early spring.

Storing:

Store fresh fennel in the refrigerator crisper, where it should keep fresh for about four days. Yet, it is best to consume fennel soon after purchase since as it ages, it tends to gradually lose its flavor. While fresh fennel can be frozen after first being blanched, it seems to lose much of its flavor during this process.

Serving Suggestions:

- * Toss thin slices of raw fennel with sweet onion and pieces of apple, pear or peeled orange, and dress with oil and vinegar. Or substitute lemon, orange or grapefruit juice for the vinegar.
- * Serve cold wedges with crumbles of Parmigiano-Reggiano cheese.
- * Add strips of raw fennel to a plate of other raw vegetables and serve with a favorite dip.
- * Dice fennel bulb and add to vegetable soup.
- * Brush thick slices with oil, season with salt and pepper, and grill.
- * Sauté thin slices in butter and garlic. Season with salt, pepper and a spritz of lemon juice.
- * Brown quarters of fennel with sliced onion in butter. Moisten with small amounts of chicken broth and white wine and season with salt and pepper. Cover and cook until tender, turning once, about 20 minutes.
- * Toss slices of fennel with olive oil, salt and pepper, place in a roasting pan and roast, turning once halfway through, about 40 minutes. If desired, sprinkle with grated Parmesan or crumbled feta.



Adapted from whfoods.com and journalnow.com