

A Guide to Asian Vegetables



**New Entry Sustainable
Farming Project**



New Entry Sustainable Farming Project

To assist recent immigrants to begin sustainable farming enterprises in Massachusetts

Sponsors:

Gerald J. and Dorothy R. Friedman School of Nutrition Science and Policy, AFE Program* at Tufts University
Community Teamwork, Inc.

*AFE: Agriculture Food and the Environment - Graduate education and research opportunities in nutrition, sustainable agriculture, local food systems, and consumer behavior related to food and the environment.

Partners:

UMass Extension Vegetable Team
USDA Farm Service Agency and NRCS
Massachusetts Dept of Agricultural Resources Vegetable Team
Regional and National Networks of Immigrant Farming Projects
Heifer International
Local and community-based organizations and farmers



For more information, visit our website: www.nesfp.org

Contact 617-636-3788, ext 2 OR nesfp@tufts.edu

*Guide prepared by Guy Koppe & Hilde Petersen—graduate students at Tufts University.
Photos used with permission from Frank Mangan, UMass Extension and www.worldcrops.org.*

Table of Contents:

Greens

Amaranth.....	1
Bok Choy.....	2
Chinese Broccoli.....	3
Chinese Celery.....	4
Chrysanthemum.....	5
Garlic Chives.....	6
Mustard Greens.....	7
Napa Cabbage.....	8
Pea Tendrils.....	9
Taro Leaves.....	10
Yau Choy.....	11
Water Spinach.....	12

Herbs

Asian Basil.....	13
Cilantro.....	14
Lemon Grass.....	15

Squashes & Melons

Asian Cucumber.....	16
Bitter Melon.....	17
Fuzzy Melon.....	18
Asian Squash.....	19

Other Vegetables

Daikon Radish.....	20
Japanese Eggplant.....	21
Kermit Eggplant.....	22
Pumpkin Blossoms.....	23
Thai Hot Peppers.....	24
Yard Long Beans.....	25

Yard long bean

Vigna unguiculata var. *sesquipedalis*

Other Common Names: Asparagus Bean, Dow Gok



History or Background of Crop: These are an ancient vegetable, with wild plants still growing in tropical Africa. They are very pronounced in flavor and have a distinctly beany taste, not sweet like the green bean.

Common Culinary Uses: Long beans work best briefly steamed, stir-fried, or braised, but also hold up well when added to stews. If you want them to be more juicy, blanch before stir frying.

Recipe:

STIR FRIED LONG BEAN WITH GARLIC

1 lb long beans, washed and trimmed
¼ tsp salt
½ tsp sugar
1 tbsp dark soy sauce
1 tbsp Chinese rice wine or dry sherry
2 tbsp water
2 tbsp peanut or corn oil
2 green onions cut into ½ inch pieces
3 medium cloves garlic, minced
2 oz ground pork

Bring 2 quarts of water to a boil in a large saucepan. Add beans and blanch for about 45 seconds, remove beans to a colander and rinse under cold running water. Combine salt, sugar, soy sauce, wine and water in a small bowl and set aside. Heat wok on high heat and add oil. Add green onion and garlic, stir-fry 4-5 seconds, add ground pork and stir-fry 1-2 minutes or until meat is no longer pink. Pour sauce into wok. Add beans and cook for 1-2 minutes until heated through. Cover and keep warm until ready to serve.

From: www.gov.mb.ca/agriculture

Thai Hot Pepper

Capsicum annuum

Other Common Names: Thai Dragons



History or Background of Crop: Small pepper well known for its extremely hot spiciness

Common Culinary Uses: Popular, especially in stir-fries. In many Thai dishes including curries, sauces and with other Asian vegetables. They dry very easily and can be stored and used this way for a long time.

Recipe:

HOT PEPPER CHICKEN

2 lbs chicken breasts, no skin, sliced thin
2 onions, thinly sliced
2 cloves garlic, minced
1 tsp. ginger, minced
6-8 Thai peppers, sliced
3 bunches of green onions, sliced
2 Tbsp soy sauce
2 Tbsp corn starch
2 Tbsp dry white wine
2 Tbsp cooking oil

Mix chicken with corn starch, wine, and soy sauce. Stir-fry for one minute. Add white onion, garlic, ginger, hot peppers. Stir-fry about 1-2 minutes more. Add green onion and stir-fry very briefly. Serve immediately over steamed rice.

From: www.baileyfarmsinc.com

Amaranth

Amaranthus tricolor; A. Retroflexus

Other Common Names: Pig Weed, Chinese Spinach, Yeen Choy



History or Background of Crop: From the family of leaf amaranths, this vegetable comes in a myriad of colors. The leaves are fragile and should be cooked right away.

Common Culinary Uses: Amaranth is as versatile as spinach, and is often steamed or sautéed. It is also common in stews or soups. For salads, use the tiniest leaves in small quantities.

Recipe:

SPICY AMARANTH

1 lb Amaranth, cut into 2 inch pieces
butter or margarine
Cooking oil
1 Tbsp onion, chopped
Spice Mixture::
½ tsp cumin seeds or ground cumin
½ tsp grated fresh ginger
1 fresh green or red chilli, deseeded
1 garlic clove

Grind the spices together and stir the mixture into the amaranth. Heat butter and a Tbsp of oil in a wok or frying pan and stir-fry the onion until just cooked. Add the spices and amaranth, the thicker stalks first, then the leafier parts. Stir-fry until cooked, adding a little water if necessary. Cover for the last few minutes to retain the flavor.

From : “Oriental Vegetables,” by Joy Larkcom

Bok Choy

Brassica rapa

Other Common Names: Shanghai bok choy, baby bok choy.



History or Background of Crop:

One of the most popular Chinese leafy greens. Although bok choy translates into “white vegetable,” it has dark green leaves or can be a uniform pale green like the Shanghai variety.

Common Culinary Uses: Bok choy is very versatile and can be simply cut up and cooked, leaves and all. Choose unblemished leaves and firm stalks for best results, and blanch before stir-frying. .

Recipe:

GRILLED BOK CHOY WITH SOY, LEMON, AND SESAME

- 3 heads of baby Bok Choy, cut in half
(or 1 head of Bok Choy cut into quarters)
- 2 Tbsp of canola oil
- 2 Tbsp of soy sauce
- Juice of ½ a lemon
- 1 tsp sugar
- 1 Tbsp sesame oil
- 1 green onion, thinly sliced

Prepare the grill. Mix together soy sauce, lemon juice, sugar, sesame oil, and green onion. Rub the cut Bok Choy with canola oil and place cut side down on the grill. Cover the grill and cook for several minutes on each side depending on the heat of the grill. When done, dress with soy dressing and serve hot.

From: Guy Koppe, 2003

Pumpkin Blossoms

Cucurbita pepo

Other Common Names: Squash blossoms, squash flower



History or Background of Crop:

Almost any member of the squash genus produces edible flowers. In countries where pumpkin blossoms are common, they are treated casually as versatile vegetables.

Common Culinary Uses: These natural envelopes can be stuffed with soft cheese, meat, cooked grain, or sauteed vegetables, and then poached, baked, microwaved, or steamed. Also great sauteed and then folded into omelets, crepes, or quesadillas.

Recipe:

CRISPY PUMPKIN BLOSSOMS

- 2/3 cup flour
- 1 tsp baking powder
- 3 leaves fresh basil, minced
- 2 Tbsp finely grated parmesan cheese
- 2 Tbsp cold water
- 2 eggs, beaten
- 3 cups oil for frying
- 12 pumpkin blossoms

In a medium bowl, stir together the flour, baking powder, basil and Parmesan cheese. Mix in water and eggs until smooth. Heat 1/2 inch of oil in a large heavy skillet over medium-high heat. When the oil is hot, dip blossoms in the batter to coat, and gently place a few at a time into the hot oil. Fry on each side until crisp and golden. Drain on paper towels.

From: www.allrecipes.com

Kermit Eggplant

Solanum melongena

Other Common Names: Asian eggplant (round), garden egg



History or Background of Crop: These round, green-skinned, lime sized Asian eggplants are dense, fairly thick skinned and seedy. An American cultivar, this variety was named after the popular television frog.

Common Culinary Uses: These small eggplants are meaty and flavorful. They can be microwaved, steamed, braised or sauteed, yet remain solid, plump, and sweet. Although seedy, the flesh softens quickly and absorbs flavor well. No need to peel.

Recipe:

STUFFED KERMIT EGGPLANTS

- 10 Kermit eggplants
- Lemon or lime juice
- 2 Tbsp chives
- 2 Tbsp minced cilantro/parsley
- ¼ tsp dried dill
- ¼ cup curried mayonnaise

Cut tops off eggplants. Microwave covered with a paper towel on top until tender throughout (6-10 minutes at 50% power). Uncover, cool, then chill. Remove seeds and pulps and set aside. Sprinkle shells lightly with lemon juice. Chop pulp, combining with remaining ingredients. Season with lemon juice. Fill eggplant shells with mixture and chill until serving. Garnish with optional minced parsley.

From: source unknown

Chinese Broccoli

Brassica oleracea

Other Common Names: Chinese Kale, Gai lan fa



History or Background of Crop: The long stems and dull green leaves are the main parts eaten, as opposed to the un-bloomed flower of Western broccoli. The full leaves are quite bitter with a sometimes spicy flavor.

Common Culinary Uses: Chinese broccoli is suited to roles somewhere between broccoli and broccoli rabe. Best when blanched and then stir-fried briefly, as it retains its nice green color.

Recipe:

STIR-FRIED SHRIMP WITH CHINESE BROCCOLI

- 4 cloves garlic, crushed and chopped
- 1 lb. medium shrimp, cleaned and peeled
- ¼ cup crushed yellow bean sauce
- ¼ cup chicken broth
- 3 Tbsp dark brown sugar
- 1 lb. Chinese broccoli, stalks in 1-inch pieces, leaves in 3-inch pieces
- Sprigs of cilantro
- Bottled Thai chili sauce
- 2 Tbsp vegetable oil for stir-frying

Place all of the ingredients within easy reach of cooking area. Set a wok over medium-high heat. When wok is hot, add the oil making sure to coat the sides. Once oil is hot, add garlic and stir-fry briefly. Add the shrimp and stir-fry for 30 seconds. Add the yellow bean sauce, chicken stock, and sugar. Stir-fry until the sugar is dissolved and blended. Add the Chinese broccoli and stir-fry until cooked through, about 2-3 minutes. Transfer to a serving platter. Tear sprigs of cilantro over the stir-fry and serve with steamed long-grain white rice. Add Thai chili sauce, if desired.

From: "True Thai: The Modern Art of Thai Cooking," by Victor Sodsook

Chinese Celery

Apium graveolens var. secalinum

Other Common Names: Cutting celery, leaf celery, soup celery



History or Background of Crop:

This relative of the traditional celery has thinner stalks and a more pronounced, somewhat pungent flavor. It probably evolved from a wild form of Asian celery.

Common Culinary Uses: Acts as both a vegetable and a seasoning. It is used primarily as a flavorful addition to soups and stews or is stir-fried.

Recipe:

CREAMY CHINESE CELERY & LEEK SOUP

- 1 ¼ lbs Chinese celery
- 3 medium leeks
- 2 bunches cilantro with roots
- 1 Tbsp vegetable oil
- ¼ cup white rice
- 2 tsp salt
- ¼ tsp fine-ground white pepper
- Lemon juice
- 6 Tbsp heavy cream or 3 Tbsp sour cream

Place celery leaves and the sliced dark parts from leeks into pot. Chop cilantro roots and stems, add to pot. Add 2 quarts water, cover and boil gently for 20-30 min. Strain broth, pressing on solids. Chop fine confetti from Chinese celery stalks (about ¾ cup) and set aside. Slice remaining celery and leek stalks. Heat oil in same pot and stir in stalks. Cook over moderate heat until they color. Add broth, rice, and salt. Bring to boil while stirring. Simmer, uncovered until rice is soft, about 20 min. Puree. Return to pot, add salt, pepper, and “confetti.” Return to simmer. Season with lemon juice. Add minced cilantro leaves. Top with Tbsp of cream.

From: “Amaranth to Zucchini,” Elizabeth Schneider

Japanese Eggplant

Solanum melongena

Other Common Names: Aubergine, Eggfruit, Brinjal



History or Background of Crop:

There are many varieties of eggplant. This smaller and skinnier variety is less bitter than others. Its skin is also more tender than its larger more recognizable cousin and doesn't need to be peeled.

Common Culinary Uses: Excellent for stuffing, roasting, and grilling. Bake, stir-fry steam.

Recipe:

GRILLED JAPANESE EGGPLANT WITH GOAT CHEESE

- 8 Japanese eggplants
- Olive oil
- Salt and pepper
- 1/2 lb fresh mild goat cheese
- 2 tsp minced garlic
- 1 tsp red pepper flakes
- 6 basil leaves, shredded

Prepare the grill. Cut the eggplants in half lengthwise. Brush the cut edges with olive oil and season with salt and pepper. In a mixing bowl, combine the cheese, garlic, red pepper flakes, basil and a pinch of salt and blend well. Refrigerate until ready to use. Place the eggplant halves on the grill, flesh side down, and cook until almost soft, about two minutes. Remove from the grill and let cool slightly. Spread the goat cheese mixture on the warm eggplant pieces and serve at once.

From: www.recipesource.com

Daikon Radish

Raphanus sativus

Other Common Names: White Radish, Oriental Winter Radish



History or Background of Crop: One of the largest radishes available. Most often associated with Japanese cuisine, it is a popular ingredient in many other cuisines as well.

Common Culinary Uses: Often pickled and dyed yellow. It is also a common addition to the Korean dish, Kim Chi. Stir fry with pork or braise with soy sauce, boil in soup, steam.

Recipe:

OVERNIGHT CHINESE DAIKON RADISH PICKLES

- 1 1/2 cups chopped daikon
- 3/4 teaspoon salt
- 1 tablespoon rice vinegar
- 1/4 teaspoon ground black pepper
- 1/4 teaspoon sesame oil (optional)

In a mixing bowl, toss daikon with salt. Cover, and refrigerate until 1 to 2 tablespoons of water is released, about 30 minutes. Drain and rinse daikon, removing as much salt as possible. Pat dry with a paper towel, and return to bowl. Stir in rice vinegar, black pepper and, if desired, sesame oil. Cover, and refrigerate at least 8 hours.

From: www.allrecipes.com

Chrysanthemum

Chrysanthemum coronarium

Other Common Names: Garland Chrysanthemum, Tong ho, Shungiku



History or Background of Crop: Abundant in Asia when the weather turns cool, these leaves are highly popular in Japanese soups or Chinese hotpots. The flavor is complex, aromatic, and intensely bitter.

Common Culinary Uses: In addition to their use in soups and other brothy dishes, the greens can be boiled, cooled, and then served as a vegetable. When cooked the color will change to a deep dark green.

Recipe:

BLANCHED CHRYSANTHEMUM GREENS WITH SESAME DRESSING

- 3/4 Cup (about 2.5 oz.) sesame seeds
- 2 Tablespoons fish or chicken stock
- 2 Tablespoons rice vinegar
- 2 Tablespoons mirin
- 2 Tablespoons soy sauce
- 2 lbs chrysanthemum greens, mustard greens or baby tatsoi

Combine the sesame seeds, stock, vinegar, mirin and soy sauce in a small bowl, stir to blend. Blanch the greens in a large pot of boiling water for about 30 seconds, just until wilted. Drain. Gently squeeze out the water. Refrigerate the greens and dressing separately until ready to serve. To serve: Toss the greens in a large bowl with the dressing

From : www.wintercreekgardens.com

Garlic Chive

Allium tuberosum

Other Common Names: Chinese chive, gau choy, nira



History or Background of Crop: Garlic chives do not taste or look like what we call chives, and are cooked as a vegetable in the lands where they are grown. There are three forms: green leaf, yellow or blanched, and flowering.

Common Culinary Uses: Commonly steamed whole, simmered in broths, stirred into thick soups, or cooked gently with moist vegetables. Stir-frying not recommended. They become sweeter and plumper when cooked in liquid.

Recipe:

FLOWERING GARLIC CHIVES WITH GINGER BUTTER

- 1 bunch flowering garlic chives
- 4 flat garlic chives (leaves) or regular chives
- 2 Tbsp butter
- 2 tsp fine-grated ginger
- 1 tsp Japanese soy sauce

Trim an inch from base of chives. Divide into 4 bunches, the flowers at one end. Cut each bunch in half and then combine the two halves to distribute the flowers evenly. Tie each bunch with a flat garlic chive, wrapping it around twice before knotting. Set bundles on rack over boiling water to steam, covered, for about 5 minutes. Combine butter and ginger in small skillet. Heat just until butter melts and becomes pale. Stir in soy sauce. Set hot chive bundles on plates and spoon over the warm sauce. Serve immediately.

From: "Amaranth to Zucchini," Elizabeth Schneider

Asian Squash

Cucurbita maxima, Cucurbita moschata

Other Common Names: Japanese pumpkin, Nam Gwa (Cantonese)



History or Background of Crop: These pumpkin-shaped squashes are not native to Asia. Presumably, the squashes were brought to tropical Asia by the Spanish and Portuguese.

Common Culinary Uses: Pumpkin/squash can be baked, steamed, boiled or fried. It is delicious served on its own or made into tasty curries, soups or desserts.

Recipe:

ASIAN SQUASH COCONUT SOUP

- 5 cups vegetable broth
- 6 oz squash, peeled, seeded and in bite size pieces
- 1 cup coconut milk
- 2 large shallots, broiled
- 1 tsp salt
- ¼ tsp white pepper
- 1 large stalk bok choy in bite size pieces
- 3 scallions, chopped fine

In a large pan, heat the broth and add the squash. Stir occasionally to a boil. Reduce the heat and add the coconut milk, shallots, salt, pepper. Return to a boil. Reduce heat again and simmer for 15 minutes until the squash is tender. Add the bok choy and stir for 1 minute. Remove from the heat. Serve sprinkled with the scallions

From: "Asian Greens," by Anita Loh-Yien Lau

Fuzzy Melon

Benincasa hispida var. *chieh-gua*

Other Common Names: Chinese squash, moqua.



History or Background of Crop:

The diversity and antiquity of cultivars in China suggest that this crop may be indigenous to southern China. Mature fruits are also eaten and are called winter gourd.

Common Culinary Uses: The immature fuzzy melon fruits have a delicious flavor, strong and distinct. Flavor can change during storage and become more acidic. The white-fleshed mature winter melon is usually served as a soup, steamed with meat.

Recipe:

SAUTEED SHREDDED FUZZY MELON

2 lbs small, firm, fuzzy melons
2 medium shallots
2 Tbsp butter
1 Tbsp vegetable oil
½ tsp salt
Lime juice
Pepper
Minced dill

Scrub melons and cut off stems and base. Pare lightly. Using shredding blade of food processor, press down firmly on fuzzy melon and shallow to cut into coarse shreds. Do not drain or dry. Heat butter and oil in large heavy skillet. Add melon, shallot, and salt. Toss over moderate heat until tender—about 10 minutes—adjusting heat so that melon does not brown, but just cooks through without drying out. Add lime juice and season. Toss with dill and serve hot.

From: “Amaranth to Zucchini,” Elizabeth Schneider

Mustard Greens

Brassica juncea

Other Common Names: Chinese Mustard, Gai Choy, Sow Cabbage



History or Background of Crop: Mustard is very popular in Chinese and South East Asian cuisine. There are many different types of mustards which range in color and flavor.

Common Culinary Uses: Delicious stir-fried or in soups. When the plants are left to go to seed the mustard seed can be collected and used as a spice. Strong-flavor mustards are blanched and served with oil or oyster sauce, or stir-fried with meat and bean sauce, or can be cut and pickled.

Recipe:

FRIED RICE WITH MUSTARD GREENS

1 cup long-grain white rice	1 lb. mustard greens
1 bunch green onions	1 red bell pepper
3 Tbsp Japanese soy sauce	3 eggs
2 tsp dark sesame oil	2 Tbsp vegetable oil
1 to 3 large garlic cloves, minced	2 Tbsp fine-diced ginger

Prepare rice according to directions. Trim and discard base of mustard. Cut into thin diagonal pieces, separating leafy tops and heavy stems. Cut green onion stems and pepper into ¼ inch slices. Thinly slice green onion greens. Combine eggs and sesame oil in small bowl. Heat wok over moderate heat. Pour in ½ Tbsp oil, add eggs and scramble quickly until just barely set. Set aside. Return wok to moderate heat and add remaining oil. Add garlic, ginger, and mustard stems and toss for about 1 minute on high. Add red pepper, green onions, and mustard leaves. Stir-fry one minute, until lightly cooked. Add rice and half the green onion greens. Stir-fry for 2-3 minutes. Add soy sauce and eggs. Remove from heat and let stand for 15 minutes. Sprinkle remaining green onion greens to serve.

From: “Amaranth to Zucchini,” Elizabeth Schneider

Napa Cabbage

Brassica Pekinensis

Other Common Names: Chinese Cabbage, Celery Cabbage



History or Background of Crop:

While several varieties of Chinese Cabbage exist, Napa Cabbage is the most widely used.

Common Culinary Uses: Like tofu, Napa Cabbage absorbs the flavors of the foods around it. It is eaten raw in salads, and often added to stir-fries and soups in the last stages of cooking. Cooks in less time than traditional cabbage.

Recipe:

CABBAGE WITH NOODLES, MUSHROOMS, & ALMONDS

1 ¾ lbs Napa cabbage	½ lb wide egg noodles
3 Tbsp butter	½ lb small mushrooms, quartered
1 tsp sugar	1 tsp salt
2 tsp cornstarch	3 Tbsp dry sherry
2/3 cup broth	½ cup chopped almonds
3 Tbsp sliced cilantro or dill	thinly sliced greens of 2 green onions

Trim base and separate leaves of cabbage. Cut in thirds lengthwise, then cut crosswise into ½ inch slices. Drop noodles into boiling salted water and cook until tender; drain. Heat 1 ½ tsp butter. Add mushrooms and toss until lightly browned. Add 1 tsp butter, the cabbage, sugar, and salt. Toss over very high heat until juices have evaporated and cabbage has browned slightly, 4 to 5 minutes. Blend cornstarch, sherry and broth. Add the skillet and bring to boil, stirring. Add noodles and remaining butter. Stir over low heat to mix well and heat through. Stir in green onion greens. Scoop into a dish, top with nuts and cilantro and toss.

From: “Amaranth to Zucchini,” Elizabeth Schneider

Bitter Melon

Momordita charantia

Other Common Names: Alligator Pear, Mahrass, Txiv Iab Dib



History or Background of Crop: Popular throughout many countries in Asia, this vegetable lives up to its name. The bitterness of the immature fruit brings out the flavor in other ingredients.

Common Culinary Uses: Often served stuffed, sliced, or stir-fried. Can also be pickled. Prepared by quick frying or incorporating into simple egg dishes. Leaves and shoots are edible when they are young.

Recipe:

MELON, POTATOES, & PEAS IN COCONUT SAUCE

2 medium bitter melons	1 ½ tsp salt
¾ tsp turmeric	1 ½ lbs potatoes (yellow-fleshed)
1 ½ Tbsp peanut or corn oil	½ cup shallots
2 chillis, seeded and diced	½ tsp fennel seeds
1 ½ Tbsp grated ginger	1 tsp ground coriander
½ tsp ground cumin	½ cup water
5 oz frozen peas	1 cup coconut milk

Peel bitter gourds lightly, leaving ridges. Scoop out large seeds. Cut into ½ inch slices, toss with 1 t. salt and ½ t. turmeric and set aside for ½ hour. Cut peeled potatoes into ¾ inch cubes and cook until barely tender. Squeeze melons to press out juice, then rinse. Add melons to boiling water until barely tender. Drain. Heat oil in saucepan over moderate flame. Add shallots and cook until lightly browned, stirring often. Add chillis, fennel, 1 T ginger, and toss. Stir in remaining turmeric, coriander and cumin. Add water, potatoes, bitter melon, peas, and coconut milk. Simmer, covered, until all elements are tender.

From: “Amaranth to Zucchini,” Elizabeth Schneider

Asian Cucumber

Other Common Names:



History or Background of Crop: In Southeast Asia, the cucumbers are shorter and thicker than the Western varieties. They are often crossed with different types of melons - making them slightly sweeter.

Common Culinary Uses: Dressed in a tangy vinaigrette, these are the ideal accompaniment to any fried or grilled dish. They may also be served as a salad in their own right. As they grow larger and more ripe, they taste like a sweet melon.

Recipe:

HOT AND SOUR CUCUMBER SALAD

- 1 pound Asian cucumbers
- ¼ cup white rice or cider vinegar
- 1 tablespoon sugar
- 1 teaspoon salt
- ½ ounce fresh red chili, finely sliced
- 1 teaspoon finely chopped garlic

Slice the cucumbers in half lengthways and, using a teaspoon, remove the seeds. Cut the cucumber halves into 3-inch by ½ inch pieces. Combine the cucumber pieces with the rest of the ingredients in a bowl and allow them to marinate for at least 4 hours or more in the refrigerator, stirring them from time to time. When you are ready to serve, drain them thoroughly.

From: “Asian Vegetarian Feast,” by Ken Hom

Pea Tendrils

Pisum sativum

Other Common Names: Pea Tips, Pea Pod Stems



History or Background of Crop: These shoots are harvested when the pea plants are 12-18 inches out of the ground. They're best used when freshly picked as they rapidly toughen and, like peas, lose their sweetness.

Common Culinary Uses: Often found stir-fried with garlic sauce at authentic Chinese restaurants. Can also be used as an alternative salad green.

Recipe:

NOODLES WITH SHRIMP AND PEA TENDRILS

Lime-Soy Mixture:

- 1 Tbsp freshly squeezed lime juice
- 1/4 tsp grated peeled fresh ginger
- 1 Tbsp soy sauce
- 1/2 tsp sugar
- 1 tsp Thai yellow curry paste
- 1/4 tsp grated garlic
- 1 tsp Asian (toasted) sesame oil

Main ingredients:

- 10 ounces Chinese egg noodles
- 3 Tbsp unsalted butter
- 20 med. shrimp, shelled
- Salt and pepper
- 8 shiitake mushrooms
- 1 ½ cups shrimp stock
- 3 cups pea tendrils

To make the lime-soy mixture, whisk together all the ingredients and set aside. Prepare the noodles in a large pot until al dente, about 2 minutes. Drain. Melt butter in a large pan over high heat until it starts to foam. Season the shrimp with salt and pepper. Add the shrimp and the shiitake mushrooms and sauté until the shrimp start to turn pink, about 2 minutes. Add the lobster stock and bring to a boil, then lower the heat to a simmer. Add 2 tablespoons of the lime-soy mixture to the shrimp and mushrooms, then add the noodles and pea tendrils and toss to combine. Simmer for 10 seconds. To serve, divide among 4 warmed shallow bowls.

From: “Terra: Cooking from the Heart of Napa,” by Hiro Sone and Lissa Doumani

Taro Leaves

Colocasia esculenta

Other Common Names: Cocoyam, Elephant's Ear, Dasheen, Eddo,



History or Background of Crop:

Taro is cultivated and eaten as a staple in many areas of the world including: West Africa, Asia, and the Caribbean.

Common Culinary Uses:

Our farmers predominantly sell the leaves, which can be boiled in coconut cream or used as edible food wrappings when steaming, baking or boiling. It is important to cook thoroughly to remove toxins in the leaves.

Recipe:

TARO LEAF AU GRATIN

2 lbs.(4 cups) taro leaves, cooked
1 cup milk
2 tbsp. butter
1/2 cup grated cheddar or gruyere cheese
1 tbsp. chopped parsley
1/2 tsp. Prepared mustard
1/4 cup chopped spring onion
salt to taste
2 eggs, lightly beaten

Cook taro leaves after cleaning. Young leaves should take only 3-5 minutes and older leaves 10-15 minutes. To keep the beautiful green color of the leaves, be sure to have the water boiling and plenty of it. Press all the liquid from the cooked taro leaves. Melt the butter and cook the parsley and spring onion till softened. Mix in with the taro leaves. Season to taste with salt and mustard. Spoon into a buttered baking dish. Combine the eggs, milk and cheese, and pour over the taro leaves. Bake at 325 F for 20-30 minutes until puffed and golden on top.

From: "Flame Tree Cookbook," www.hawaii.edu

Lemon Grass

Cymbopogon citratus

Other Common Names: Citronella, Thakai (Laotian)



History or Background of Crop: A native of India. This flavorful ingredient is used frequently in Thai and Vietnamese cuisines. It is also used for medicinal purposes.

Common Culinary Uses: The tender inner bulb is minced up and added to stir fries or marinades. The outer stalks can be cut into manageable lengths and added to soup to flavor the broth. Also be used in salad dressings and to make tea.

Recipe:

LEMON GRASS BEEF, CHICKEN OR TOFU

2-3 pounds beef, chicken or tofu	4 cloves garlic
1 large onion	3 Tbsp vegetable oil
1 tsp salt	2 Tbsp minced lemon grass
1 tsp ground chiles	4 Tbsp fish sauce
2-3 green onion stalks	2-3 Tbsp ground peanuts
1 Tbsp sugar	1 Tbsp honey

Cut beef or chicken into small pieces. Peel garlic and slice finely. Cut onion into 1/2 inch strips. Peel off the hard outer layers of lemon grass stalk and discard. Peel off the medium layers of lemon grass stalk for stewing purposes. Mince the soft inner layers of the stalk. Heat oil in large frying pan over medium heat. Add salt, garlic and onion. Fry over medium heat until onion is opaque. Add lemon grass and chili. Fry 1 - 2 minutes until fragrant. Add beef and cook until lightly browned. Mix in fish sauce, sugar and honey. Cook to preference. Stir occasionally and add water if necessary. Remove the medium layers of lemon grass stalk before serving.

From: www.gourmetsleuth.com

Cilantro

Coriandrum sativum

Other Common Names: Chinese Parsley, Coriander.



History or Background of Crop: This member of the carrot family has a very pungent odor and is widely used in Asian, Mexican, and Caribbean cooking. It is actually the leaves (and stems) of the Coriander plant.

Common Culinary Uses: The Chinese add cilantro to stir fries and sauces. The whole plant, roots and all, is often boiled and eaten as a vegetable.

Recipe:

FRESH CILANTRO RELISH

- 1 cup firmly packed cilantro leaves
- 6 scallions, sliced fine
- 2 green chiles, seeded and chopped
- 1/3 cup lemon juice
- 1 tsp salt
- 2 tsp white sugar
- 1 tsp garam masala (or 1/3 tsp each of ground coriander, cumin, and freshly ground black pepper)
- 2 Tbsp water

In a blender or food processor, mix together the cilantro, scallions, chiles, and one tablespoon of the lemon juice for about 1 minute or until smooth. Pour into a bowl and stir in the remaining ingredients. Best used on the day it was made.

From: "Asian Greens," by Anita Loh-Yien Lau

Yu Choy

Brassica rapa

Other Common Names: Flowering cabbage, Choy Sum, Oil Seed Rape



History or Background of Crop: The flowering stalks and tender leaves are widely enjoyed in Asia. Considered one of the best Chinese cabbages.

Common Culinary Uses: Yu choy has a delicate, sweet, slightly cabbage-like flavor that requires minimal cooking. Most often seen simply stir-fried with a little garlic. Important quality characteristics are a tender stalk and closed yellow flower buds.

Recipe:

YU CHOY WITH SOY SAUCE AND OYSTER SAUCE

- 2 bunches yu choy
- 1 Tbsp vegetable oil
- 1/2 tsp salt
- 2 tsp water
- 1 1/2 tsp soy sauce
- 1 1/2 tsp oyster sauce
- 1 tsp unsalted butter

Cut yu choy stalks crosswise into 1/4 inch slices Cut the leaves into 2 inch long pieces. In a heavy skillet, heat oil over moderately high heat until hot but not smoking and stir-fry yu choy with salt for 2 minutes. In a bowl stir together water, soy sauce, and oyster sauce. Add mixture and butter to skillet and stir-fry until crisp-tender, 3 to 4 minutes.

From: "Choi to the World: an Introduction to Asian Greens,"
www.asiafood.org

Water Spinach

Ipomea aquatica

Other Common Names: Swamp cabbage, Morning glory



History or Background of Crop:

This is not a relative of traditional spinach, rather a swamp-thriving native of tropical India (it can also be cultivated on dry land). A versatile vegetable used in almost every Asian cuisine.

Common Culinary Uses: In Asia, water spinach is stir-fried, most often with fermented white bean curd, shrimp paste, or garlic. Use all of the leaves and the top half of the stems.

Recipe:

WATER SPINACH SALAD WITH SESAME SEEDS

large bunch water spinach
3 carrots
5 medium red radishes
2 Tbsp sesame seeds
2 Tbsp lemon juice
1 tsp honey
1 tsp Japanese soy sauce
1 tsp dark sesame oil
3 tsp thinly sliced scallion greens

Remove leaves from stems. Rinse, dry and cool. Cut stems into ¼ inch pieces. Soak for a few minutes in lukewarm water to crisp. Dry and refrigerate, covered, for ½ hour or more. Thinly slice both carrots and radishes and chill each separately in a bowl with ice water for 20 minutes. In a small pan, toast sesame seeds for about 5 minutes, or until tan. In a small dish, stir together lemon juice, honey, and soy sauce. Add oil. Toss leaves with half the dressing and 1 Tbsp of sesame seeds. Arrange on plates. In a separate bowl, toss together stems, carrots, radishes, scallions, and the remaining dressing and seeds. Arrange on leaves and serve immediately.

From: “Amaranth to Zucchini,” Elizabeth Schneider

Asian Basil

Ocimum basilicum L.

Other Common Names: Thai Basil, Licorice Basil, Sweet Basil



History or Background of Crop: Basil is used more in Thai cooking than Italian, which is not surprising since the plant is said to have originated in Thailand and/or India.

Common Culinary Uses: The leaves of this herb are tossed into salads, stir-fried dishes, and curries. They’re also used to garnish soups.

Recipe:

ASIAN PESTO

Juice of 1 lime
1 cup Asian Basil leaves
50 rau rum leaves
½ cup toasted unsalted peanuts, ground (optional)
1 small chile pepper, seeded and chopped
3 cloves garlic, peeled and minced
1 tsp gingerroot, peeled and shredded
1/3 cup vegetable oil

Mix together all the ingredients and heat in a saucepan. Bring to a boil and simmer for 3 minutes. Chill in the refrigerator before using. Excellent served over salmon or egg noodles.

From: “Asian Greens,” by Anita Loh-Yien Lau