

The Beanery

by Anne DiNardi Danis and Terry de la Vega

Springtime leads us into the outdoors again, after hibernation. These recipes are for taking out (they carry well), or for eating in, and one is a fine way to culminate an afternoon's walk.

Refried Beans (Refritos)

2 c. pinto beans, cooked (about 5 c. after cooking)
2 med. onions, chopped 1 t. cumin seeds, crushed
3 T. olive oil 1 green pepper and/or rib celery, chopped
2 cloves garlic, minced (opt.) ½ to 1 c. tomato sauce
4 oz. cheddar or jack cheese, shredded (1 cup)
salt, pepper

1. Saute chopped vegetables in oil until softened.
 2. Add cooked beans, a cup of water or tomato sauce and cumin. Cover and let beans and vegetables cook until all is soft.
 3. Mash the beans until the consistency looks creamy, with plenty of whole beans still evident.
 4. Stir in cheese and let it melt. Season to taste.
- This classic taco filling can be served cold as well. Simply spread on bread with shredded cheese and lettuce or sprouts. It also makes a fine base for a loaf!

Green Egg Salad

½ ripe avocado, mashed smooth
2 large or 3 medium hard-cooked eggs, chopped
Mix the above together, then add:
1 t. soy sauce
1 T. lemon or lime juice
¼ c. sprouts, minced celery, grated carrots, etc.
This is a tasty alternative to plain egg salad, creamy avocado, with snappy sprouts.

In the very early spring, when patches of snow still stubbornly cling to the corners of fields and the hedgerows, the first edible greens make their appearance. Pick the youngest dandelions you can find by twisting your foraging knife around the small plant's base (this will be trimmed off later). I imagine my ancestors in the hills of northern Italy doing just this, then going home to make the following springtime soup:

Beans and Greens

1 lb. dandelion greens, trimmed and washed well
(any greens can be substituted)
4 cups water or stock 2-3 T. olive oil
2 cloves garlic, sliced large salt, pepper
2 cups cooked white beans (cannelini are traditional)

1. Boil the greens until almost tender in the water or stock.
2. Meanwhile, brown the garlic in the oil, then remove it.
3. Take a few of the cooked greens and stir them into the hot garlic-flavored oil.
4. Spill this mixture into the pot with the rest of the greens.
5. Stir in the cooked beans, and heat thoroughly. Season and serve with crusty bread and freshly grated cheese. The complementary proteins in the beans, greens and bread make this a complete meal.

Sprouted seeds are fresh vegetables you can have year round. Since seeds have the potential to make plants, adding water and heat to them starts them growing. Sprouts abound with complete protein, vitamins and minerals. They make healthful, inexpensive salads mixed with chopped or grated vegetables and fruits such as greens, carrots, apples, pears, celery, onions, cucumbers, mushrooms, cabbage, peppers, etc. The easiest seeds to sprout are: alfalfa, mung and fenugreek seeds. Many whole seeds, grains, dried beans or legumes will sprout: unhulled sesame or sunflower seeds, oats, wheat, rye, soybeans, lentils, green peas, lima beans, chick peas, fava beans.

How to sprout seeds:

1. Choose whole, clean seeds, grains or beans. Remove broken seeds and debris. Seeds should be unsprayed.
2. Place a small amount in a jar and soak overnight.
3. Drain water, reserving for soup stocks, vegetable-cooking water or for watering houseplants.
4. Seeds should then go into a wide mouthed jar. Cover jar with cheesecloth or a plastic sprouter lid (available at Potsdam Co-op). Invert jar so that the water will drain and circulate inside.
5. Store jar in the dark, either by covering with a towel or by placing in a cabinet. Also, keep sprouts warm.
6. Rinse sprouts 1-3 times daily by running water into jar, then draining most of it out before replacing it to store. Sprouts must be kept moist, not wet, or they will grow mold and rot. Seeds will sprout to their peak nutritional state in three to five days.

Seed	Peak Length
Alfalfa	one inch
Lentils	two inches
Soy	three inches
Mung	three inches
grains	length of sprout= length of grain

- If you place sprouts in direct sunlight for a few hours before eating, they turn green, thus producing chlorophyll and vitamin C.
- Always cook sprouts lightly, at the end of cooking time as their texture and flavor are delicate. Bean sprouts, however, can stand longer cooking as they are heartier. Add alfalfas raw as a garnish to hot dishes, in salads and sandwiches.

