

Balsamic-roasted beetroot with goat's cheese and rocket

We buy a wonderful, locally produced, organic goat's-milk cheese from our local farmers' market and simply shave it fine for this salad. A soft creamy feta would also work well with the concentrated sweetness of the roasted beetroot.

6–8 small beetroots (500g)
olive oil
pinch of sea salt
1 tablespoon balsamic vinegar
300g rocket leaves (including flowers, if available), washed and drained
100–200g goat's cheese, finely shaved or cut into small cubes
extra virgin olive oil for drizzling

Place whole, unpeeled beets in a small saucepan, cover with cold water and bring to a boil. After about 15 or 20 minutes check whether they are soft right through by piercing them with a skewer or sharp knife. When soft, drain and allow to cool for 10 minutes. Under cold running water, peel beets using your fingers. The tough outer skins should just rub off, but if this isn't working, peel them with a small knife.

Heat oven to 375°C. Slice beets into bite-sized segments. Place in a roasting dish and toss with about 1 tablespoon of olive oil and a pinch of salt. Roast for about 15 minutes, turning segments once or twice, until they start to shrink and caramelize.

Remove dish from oven and immediately sprinkle with balsamic vinegar, tossing slices to coat evenly.

When cool, arrange on 4 individual plates with the rocket leaves and goat's cheese. Drizzle with a little extra virgin olive oil before serving.

SERVES 4

Bok choy stir-fry

Stir-frying requires fast intense heat. Moisture on the leaves creates steam which rapidly wilts the greens. Spicy white pepper highlights the earthy/sweet flavour of bok choy. This method works with other Chinese greens too, including gai lan and choy sum or any other variety with thick but tender stems.

1 bunch bok choy (about 400g)
1 teaspoon rice bran oil
½ teaspoon toasted sesame oil
small pinch of ground white pepper
2–3 teaspoons shoyu

Trim base off bok choy to separate leaves. Slice stalks and leaves into 3cm lengths. Wash thoroughly and drain in a colander.

Heat a wok or large frying pan over high heat. Add the oils. When the oils are very hot, add the bok choy. Keep heat high and stir for 2–3 minutes until greens and stems have wilted. (The water on the leaves should be sufficient to create enough steam and prevent burning, however add a little extra water if necessary.)

Season bok choy with pepper and shoyu, toss for another 30 seconds and transfer into a serving dish. Serve immediately.

SERVES 4 AS A SIDE DISH

For successful stir-frying, use an oil that can be safely heated, such as rice bran or sesame oil, and follow these simple steps:

1. Cut everything into even, small or thin pieces.
2. Heat the wok or frying pan before adding the oil, but do not let the oil smoke.
3. Keep the heat high. Unless cooking relatively small amounts, fry each vegetable (or meat or tofu) separately.
4. Keep cooked ingredients warm in a covered bowl. Mix together at the end and heat through briefly.
5. For an extra healthy stir-fry, add water to half-steam/half-fry the vegetables.
6. Season each batch of vegetables with a little salt. This will draw out moisture and add to the steaming effect. Add shoyu towards the end of the cooking process to prevent it burning.

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