

Fennel

History

Fennel can be traced back to the Mediterranean region. It is mentioned in writings from the ancient Romans- in fact, fennel grew on, the ruler, Charlemagne's farms. Ancient Egyptians used fennel as a medicine, and the Chinese treated snake bites with it. The United States was introduced to fennel in the 1700s. The vegetable thrives in Salinas Valley, California, and other regions of the southwest. Fennel grows wild in Australia, where it is considered a weed.

Fennel is a white bulb, much resembling an onion, with stalks and leafy greens growing on top, much resembling celery. Both celery and fennel are part of the Apiaceae family along with parsley, dill, and carrots. The bulb, stalks, and leaves all are edible. Stems can grow up to several feet high. When flowering, a yellow bloom is produced. This veggie packs a crunchy texture, much like celery. Some people say that fennel tastes sweet like licorice! Fennel is a good source of vitamins A, C, and B. One bulb of fennel has nearly half a day's worth of vitamin C. It contains fiber, potassium, phosphorus, calcium, iron, and copper.



Varieties

Florence fennel is also called “bulb fennel” because of its large celery-like bulb. This variety can grow to be about 3 feet tall. Trieste and zefa fina are two popular varieties of the Florence fennel.

Sweet fennel is grown as an herb for its seeds, which are commonly used in sauces and breads. It can be 4-5 feet tall. Bronze fennel is a type of sweet fennel with bronzed leaves.

Fun Facts

- Fennel has been medicinally used to calm infants and relieve muscle spasms.
- Fresh fennel can be found between October and January.
- The name “fennel” comes from the Latin term “foeniculum,” meaning “little hay.”



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