

TRICKS OF THE TRADE

A Bonanza of Vegetables Prepped and Ready

By SARAH ROSE

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As the season of farm-fresh vegetables arrives, gardeners, farm-share subscribers and green-market shoppers often find it hard to keep up with the bounty. Too often, an overload of vegetables winds up rotting.



Purple Kale Kitchenworks chef and cooking instructor Ronna Welsh in her kitchen. *Donna Alberico for The Wall Street Journal*

The vegetable onslaught "can feel like a terrific, privileged burden," says Ronna Welsh, who runs [Purple Kale Kitchenworks](#), which offers cooking classes in Brooklyn, N.Y. But home cooks can use the same strategies that help professional chefs manage kitchen inventory, says Ms. Welsh.

A raw vegetable carries with it a daunting list of tasks: It has to be washed, chopped, cooked and then slotted into a recipe with other items. "When you come home from work, exhausted, that is exactly when you shouldn't try to cook a meal with your fresh vegetables," she says.

Restaurant kitchens manage ingredients with "holding points," in which each item is prepared and cooked to the last point at which it is most versatile. That saves on work later and helps extend the life of vegetables. For instance, roasting raw beets to their holding point will give you another week of utility for them (or, if you freeze them, several months). Rather than looking at a bundle of kale and trying to imagine a single recipe for it, Ms. Welsh suggests sautéing it in olive oil and

leaving it in the fridge cooked where it will "hold" for up to a week.

That simple sautéed kale can then quickly become the filling for an improvised frittata or a sandwich, part of a pasta dish, garnish in a soup, a stand-alone side, or an ingredient in a grain salad. With a variety of vegetables all individually cooked to their holding points, home chefs have a paint box of flavors and ingredients to use.

As the growing season progresses from the tender lettuces of early summer to the woody root

vegetables of autumn, cooking methods and holding points should adapt, says Ms. Welsh. If you're overwhelmed with salad greens, fill your sink up with water and wash and dry everything all at once, Ms. Welsh suggests. Spread paper towels across the counter with the dried greens and roll the entire bundle together, like a jelly roll, to hold lettuces in the fridge for up to a week. No need for a plastic bag or bin.

When it gets too hot to turn on the oven and it seems as if there is more produce than there are family members to eat it, many home cooks turn to canning and pickling to preserve vegetables at their peak. If you don't have experience in preserving, cook August's tomatoes into a quick sauce and freeze it for future pastas.



It's a Wrap: Ms. Welsh recommends rolling washed produce, such as Japanese turnips, above, in paper towels before storing in the fridge. *Donna Alberico for The Wall Street Journal*

How You Know Her

Cooked in green-market-oriented restaurants Savoy and Rose Water.

Founded Purple Kale Kitchenworks in 2010.

Writes the blog 'Two Minutes to Dinner' at purplekale.com.

By autumn, root vegetables and squash might linger in a vegetable bin for weeks with little loss of quality. Rather than accumulating a root cellar of uncooked starches, slice squash in half, roast it face down on a cookie sheet, then scoop out the flesh to hold as a purée or mash. It might then become the filling for a pasta or the base for a soup.

Getting produce to a holding point doesn't require obsessive attention, says Ms. Welsh, who might poach garlic, which she uses in other dishes such as pasta or a flavored butter, or braise a Jerusalem artichoke while opening mail, playing with her two children or chatting on the phone.

Many farm-share subscribers and greenmarket enthusiasts are discouraged by leftover stems, stalks, leaves, tops and peelings. Even without a compost bin, Ms. Welsh says these need not go to waste. Stems and leaves can be pulverized in a food

processor and boiled in a five-minute vegetable stock for risotto or put away in the freezer. Stalks can be chopped and dropped into a "pickle bank," a casual brine of vinegar, salt, water, sugar and spices that sees constant replenishment. The stalks can then be used in salads or as a side dish.

Labeling is important, says Ms. Welsh, who keeps masking tape and a marker handy so she can quickly inventory items. "Let the labels cue you."

Poached Garlic

Because the garlic is cooked, it can be added at the last minute to soup, pasta, risotto and a vinaigrette. It makes a delicious spread for sandwiches, too.

6 heads garlic, broken up into cloves, unpeeled

2 to 2½ cups water

In a small saucepan, combine cloves and water, making sure that the cloves are submerged. Cover and simmer until the garlic is very tender, about 15 minutes. Remove cloves from water to cool. Reserve the garlic cooking water to make garlic stock, or keep it for cooking pasta or rice.

Once cool enough to handle, squeeze out garlic cloves, discarding any rough ends, but reserving peel for use in garlic stock or tomato sauce.

Store poached garlic, covered with olive oil, in the refrigerator for up to 10 days. Freeze for up to three months.

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Stalk Stock

Likely, this won't be the stock you warm up for a brothy, restorative soup, although you could. Alone, it is acidic and tastes, well, a little grassy. However, combined with grains, used as a soup base, as a stock for risotto, or to build a lovely sauce for fish, it is surprisingly elegant.

Be precise about preparing your ingredients. A little white pith from the lemon rind or a few dark green celery leaves could turn the stock surprisingly bitter.

Stalks and fronds from one fennel bulb

Stems from one bunch of parsley

Ends and yellow leaves from one bunch of celery

peel from one lemon, white pith scraped away

¼ yellow onion, sliced

6 cups water

2 tablespoons white wine vinegar

4 cloves garlic, finely minced

½ teaspoon, or more, salt

Combine fennel, parsley, celery, and lemon scraps, and the piece of onion in a food processor. Process until finely ground. Transfer to a medium pot. Add water and white wine vinegar. Bring to a quick boil and simmer for a few minutes, just until the herbs darken. Strain immediately. While broth is still very hot, add garlic and stir. Let sit until completely cool. Strain once more. Add salt.

Store in refrigerator for up to five days, or freeze for months.

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Pappardelle with Young Garlic and Fiddleheads

Yield: 4 servings

8 ounces pappardelle

2 tablespoons salt, plus extra for seasoning

2 tablespoons olive oil

1 small red onion, sliced

1 bunch of garlic greens, chopped (including leafy stalk)

1/3 pound fiddlehead ferns, ends lightly trimmed

1 tablespoon cold butter

pecorino cheese, grated

In a large pot, add 8 cups of water and 2 tablespoons salt. Cover and bring to a boil.

Meanwhile, wash fiddleheads and garlic greens in a sink or bowlful of ice water, swishing around well. Lift up the vegetables to remove them from the dirty water and rest them on paper toweling to dry.

When water comes to a boil, add fiddleheads and blanch for one minute. The baby ferns should turn bright green and crisp tender. Remove them with a slotted spoon to a small bowl. Cover pot, turn off heat and set aside.

In the meantime, place a large sauté pan over high heat. Add olive oil and swirl to coat the bottom of the pan. Immediately add the onion and turn heat to medium. Cook, tossing occasionally, until onions are translucent, about 12 minutes. You may let them pick up a bit of color, but not too much. Salt them cautiously at this stage.

Bring cooking water back to the boil and then add the pappardelle.

At the same time, add garlic greens and fiddleheads to the onions and continue to cook, tossing frequently, until the fiddleheads are tender and the vegetables begin to cook as one delicious mess, 2 to 3 minutes. When pasta is al dente, scoop out a ladle of its cooking water, and then strain the noodles. Add the pasta water to the fiddlehead sauté, turn the heat to high and cook about 15 seconds more. Add the cold butter and cook still, tossing together until the sauté becomes a light sauce. Taste for salt. Add the pasta and toss together until the noodles are coated and have absorbed the flavors of the pan. Plate pasta and top with freshly grated pecorino cheese.

Delicious warm or cold.

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