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A Worldwide Vegetarian Journey to Discover the Foods That Nourish America's Immigrant Soul.

November 2016

CELERY AND FENNEL:

A BIT OF SPARKLING FLAVOR

Celery Salad with *Gorgonzola*

Onion – Celery Casserole

Warm Autumn Julienned Salad *Dijon*

**British Baked Red Cabbage with Apples,
Dried Cherries, and Fennel Flowers**

The name celery was given to the crunchy petiole in 1664 by the British. Sitting in a pub in Greenwich, England, I noticed a large glass of water sitting behind the bar filled with stalks of celery and I knew that those stalks of celery were not there to accommodate the bloody Mary drinkers. Oh how I hoped someone would order a “Chelsea cocktail.” I had heard of the football-loyalty drink in which a large celery stalk stirrer is served in a pint of Guinness but I honestly could not image Brits, even with their passion for celery, combining Guinness and celery.



Solid celery leaf stalks, the form with which we are familiar, were developed by the Italians in the seventeenth century. The hollow-stalked celery form, was known and cultivated as far back as 850 BC. It was very similar to lovage, the herb plant we treasure for its celery taste. Celery was considered by the ancients as a holy plant and was used in antiquity less as an edible vegetable and mostly for medicinal purposes. The petioles and leaves were said to lower blood pressure but the seeds were considered to be the most important medicinal. They were employed by Ayurvedic healers to create potions to treat water retention, poor digestion, colds and influenza, liver ailments, and even arthritis. We know that wild celery was growing in the Nile Valley in 1321 BC and it must have been treasured because King Tutankhamun was buried with garlands that contained wild celery leaves and inflorescences, the umbels described by Carl Linnaeus and the characteristic for which celery was classified in the family Umbelliferae (later renamed Apiaceae).

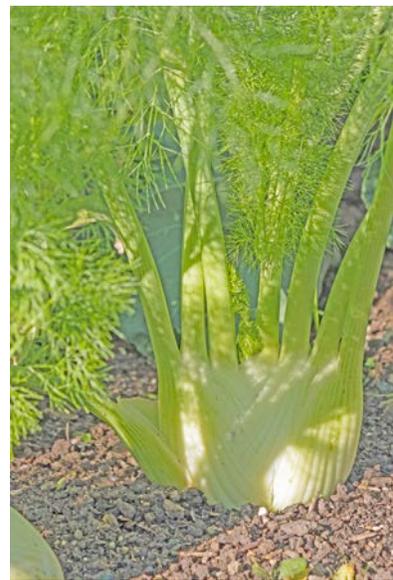
Pascal or green celery, *Apium graveolens* 'dulce', is more popular on this side of the Atlantic; Europeans prefer the self-bleaching hybrid and are much fonder of celeriac, *Apium graveolens* 'rapaceum', than are Americans.

Allergic reactions to the ingestion of celery, most prevalent in Central Europe, are known that have resulted in fatal anaphylactic shock. In the EU food labels may have a celery warning just as we have warnings that food may contain peanuts or tree nuts.

Celery appeared in the relish dish for every formal or restaurant meal for decades before and after World War II. A leafed stalk of celery always extended over the end of the relish dish as a dramatic garnish. Celery then seemed to take on a very different role. It was stuffed with cream cheese mixtures and provided, with other *crudités*, as a scoop for dips, a role it reprises still with enormous frequency.



When I was taking a course on ancient Greek history, mention was made that Marathon, the battlefield where the Athenians defeated the Persians and drove the survivors to the sea in 490 BC, translated to “field of fennel.” Research did confirm that fennel was named *marathon* by the Greeks, meaning “grow thin” because it was thought to suppress appetite. Fennel seeds have been chewed between meals for centuries to assuage hunger. It has also long been used as a carminative for relief of colic and gas and for relief of constipation. The ancient Chinese used fennel as a snake bite remedy.



Because fennel also forms wonderful umbels, like celery and lovage and dill, it is classified as a member of the Umbelliferae, a family of plants to which the formation of umbels is common. The family is now called Apiaceae, a designation that obliterates the reference to umbels and, thus, the easy classification of plants. *Foeniculum vulgare*, the self seeding garden variety, is of culinary use for its aromatic leaves and seeds, and for its pollen, now an expensive gourmet item. A plant or two of fennel has a way of becoming more fennel that you could ever want. They wave gently in the summer breeze and salvage the garden landscape in the hot

summer. As they sway, their seeds are dispersed and more irresistible lacy plants sprout up or wait until the next spring to surprise you. Harvesting the seeds helps control the volunteers but you never get all the seeds, trimming off the seed heads controls the dispersal but ruins the landscape of waving umbels and eliminates the food supply for the larvae of the Mouse Moth and the Anise Swallowtail, both of whom will be attracted right up to your back door if you grow fennel. Collecting pollen for “the gourmet touch” is tedious but rewarding for the pollen for your table and the consequent reduction of pollen for pollination. You just can not take a long summer vacation if you chose to grow fennel . . .

I had never tasted the bulbous leaves of the Florence fennel plant until I visited in Italian-American homes. It too cleansed the palate between courses but left a slightly licorice / anise aftertaste that was divine. But, as with celery, you need not resort to the relish dish of yore. Try these recipes and then continue the journey by trying some of the recipes that I included in *A Worldwide Journey to Discover the Foods That Nourish America’s Immigrant Soul*.

CELERY SALAD WITH GORGONZOLA

TPT - 1 hour and 7 minutes;
1 hour = flavor development period

This is a salad that is quickly prepared and goes with almost any meal. I have even used it, quite successfully, I may add, to accompany a menu from the Himalayan Kingdom of Bhutan. It is a refreshing salad to turn to when the palate needs to be cleared.

1 1/2 tablespoons calorie-reduced or light mayonnaise

1 1/2 tablespoons crumbled Gorgonzola cheese

6 celery ribs—thinly sliced crosswise

1/8 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper, or to taste

In a mixing bowl, combine mayonnaise and *Gorgonzola* cheese. Stir to combine.

Add *thinly* sliced celery. Stir to combine well.

Season with black pepper.

Chill for at least 1 hour in the refrigerator to allow flavors to develop.

Serve chilled.

Yields 6 servings
adequate for 4 people

Note: This recipe may be halved or doubled, when required.

1/6 SERVING – PROTEIN = 1.0 g.; FAT = 1.8 g.; CARBOHYDRATE = 2.3 g.;
CALORIES = 30; CALORIES FROM FAT = 54%



ONION – CELERY CASSEROLE

TPT - 1 hour and 5 minutes

Back in the 1970s, before legislation required the posting of ingredients and food values on food packaging, I wrote dozens of letters to companies asking for information, including sodium content, on packaged and canned foods. One soup company actually responded tersely with no information and a statement that their canned soups and sauces were not designed for people on low-sodium diets. A few years thereafter they were required to provide the food values of their canned products and, low and behold, the sodium content of their soups was very noticeably reduced.

There is a simple elegance about this divinely delicious casserole which owes its inspiration to the French soubise and to the wonderful ways in which the French star celery as a cooked vegetable. The original version was evolved back during the years when convenience cooking was sweeping the nation and it seemed that cooking had become little more than adding a bit of something to a can of soup or a package of something. In the case of this recipe, the addition of a can of cream of celery soup provided richness and intensifies the bright celery taste. Cooking with canned soups was, perhaps, a useful weekday tool as women moved into the workforce but the sodium level of these concoctions was astronomical. Celery is a high sodium vegetable to start with so adding a high-sodium soup to a celery dish became a real health no-no. Cream of celery soup disappeared from the soup shelves and in its stead appeared low-sodium version of other varieties; the soup companies tried hard to keep up, even the company whose letter I have kept all these years.

1 tablespoon butter

3 medium onions—sliced crosswise into rings

2 large stalks celery—*finely* diced

1 tablespoon butter

1 1/2 tablespoons unbleached white flour

1 cup skimmed milk

1/2 cup light cream *or* half and half

1/4 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper, or to taste

1 cup shredded (about 4 ounces) Swiss *Gruyère* cheese

***or* other Swiss-type cheese, of choice**

1 tablespoon butter—*melted*

12 thin slices French bread

Preheat oven to 300 degrees F. Prepare a shallow 1-quart ceramic quiche dish or a 9-inch deep dish pie plate by coating with non-stick lecithin spray coating or by oiling.

In a skillet, preferably non-stick-coated, combine 1 tablespoonful butter, onion rings, and *finely* diced celery. Cook over *LOW-MEDIUM* heat, stirring frequently until onions are translucent and celery is soft, *allowing neither the onion nor the celery to brown*. Remove from heat.

In a saucepan, set over *LOW-MEDIUM* heat, prepare sauce. Melt 1 tablespoonful of butter. Remove from heat and, using a wire whisk, make a *roux* by beating in flour. Return to heat and, stirring constantly, cook for 2 minutes, *being careful not to burn or overbrown the roux*. Remove from heat and gradually beat milk, cream, and black pepper. Return saucepan to heat and cook, stirring constantly with a wire whisk, until thickened. Remove from heat.

Add shredded cheese and, while stirring constantly with a whisk, work cheese into *béchamel* sauce.

Add sautéed vegetables to cheese sauce. Stir to combine.

Using a pastry brush, brush one side of each slice of French bread with *melted* butter. Place on top of casserole ingredients, butter-side-up, around the edge of *quiche* dish.

Bake in preheated 300 degree F. oven for 30 minutes, or until heated through and *golden brown*.

Serve at once.

Yields 6 servings
adequate for 4 people

Note: This recipe may be halved, when required. I use an 8-inch quiche dish to prepare this for two.

1/6 SERVING – PROTEIN = 6.9 g.; FAT = 13.9 g.; CARBOHYDRATE = 25.3 g.;
CALORIES = 265; CALORIES FROM FAT = 47%

WARM AUTUMN JULIENNE SALAD *DIJON*

TPT - 1 hour and 27 minutes;
1 hour = marination period

After so many tossed green summer salads, a cool autumn evening cries for something else, something that is just a bit more substantial and just a bit more complex, and yet still bright and fresh tasting. This salad is a favorite when the harvest is at our fingertips.

1/2 small fennel bulb—trimmed, separated into stalks, and well-washed
1 medium carrot—scraped or pared
1 small red bell pepper—cored and seeded
1 small leek—trimmed of green portion, split lengthwise, and well-washed

APPLE–DILL MARINADE:

1/4 cup unsweetened apple juice
2 tablespoons apple cider vinegar
4 teaspoons *Dijon* mustard with wine
2 tablespoons fresh dillweed—finely chopped
Freshly ground black pepper, to taste

2 teaspoons *extra virgin* olive oil

6 soft lettuce leaves, such as *Boston* or *Simpson*—well-rinsed and dried
Fennel sprigs, trimmed from bulb, for garnish
Dillweed sprigs, for garnish
***Home-grown, spray-free Chrysanthemum* blossoms, for garnish, if available**

Slice fennel, carrots, red pepper, and leek into 2-inch julienne slices. Turn into a plastic container with tightly fitting lid.

In a small bowl, combine apple juice, vinegar, *Dijon* mustard, dillweed, and pepper. Using a small whisk, combine thoroughly. Add to julienned vegetables. Toss to coat all ingredients.

Refrigerate for 1 hour. Toss container frequently to insure uniform marination.

Using a salad spinner or a sieve, remove as much residual marinade and accumulated liquid as possible.

In a wok or a non-stick-coated skillet set over *MEDIUM* heat, heat oil. *Stir-fry* the julienned vegetables for about 2 minutes. Using a slotted spoon, remove from wok to a soup plate.

Place lettuce leaves on individual salad plates. Apportion julienned vegetables to salad plates. Garnish with fennel and dillweed sprigs. *Serve at once*, garnished with a Chrysanthemum blossom or two.

Yields 6 individual servings

Note: This recipe may be doubled, when required.

1/6 SERVING – PROTEIN = 0.5 g.; FAT = 1.2 g.; CARBOHYDRATE = 3.5 g.;
CALORIES = 27; CALORIES FROM FAT = 40%

BRITISH BAKED RED CABBAGE WITH APPLES, DRIED CHERRIES, AND FENNEL FLOWERS

TPT - 3 hours and 20 minutes

Accustomed to ethnically diverse produce offerings on Long Island, we often educated a grocery store cashier on Long Island with the Italian name, “finocchio,” when we bought Florence fennel. When we came to Pennsylvania, we found that the produce manager did not even use the name fennel for the delicious, sweet, cleansing bulb of “Foeniculum vulgare ‘azoricum’” we loved, incorrectly calling it anise. I could not possibly count the times a confused grocery store cashier asked “What is this?” Just getting them to remember that the real name is fennel is as far as I go.

Fennel is one of the nine herbs sacred to Anglo Saxons. Fenol, in Anglo Saxon, or fenel, in Middle English, was introduced to Great Britain from Southern Europe and used as a medicinal for years, it has become a favorite for the summer garden and they have, as have we, found ways to enjoy it.

1 tablespoon butter

1 medium red cabbage

2 apples—peeled, seeded, and chopped (*our preference is for Golden Delicious apples*)

1/2 cup dried cherries

3 tablespoons diced fennel

1 tablespoon sugar

2 tablespoons *home-grown, spray-free* fennel flowers

Freshly ground black pepper, to taste

Freshly grated nutmeg, to taste

A pinch or two salt

2 tablespoons herb vinegar, of choice

**1 tablespoon *home-grown, spray-free* fennel flowers
—for garnish**

Preheat oven to 300 degrees F. Prepare a 3-quart soufflé dish or other baking dish by buttering.

Remove the tough, outer leaves of the cabbage and cut into quarters. Rinse very thoroughly. Drain. Using a sharp knife, shred the cabbage and, using a salad spinner, rinse well and spin dry.

Make a layer of about *one-third* of the shredded cabbage, *one-third* of the apple pieces, *one-third* of the dried cherries, and 1 tablespoon of the diced fennel in the bottom of the prepared baking dish. Sprinkle a teaspoonful of sugar and a portion of the fennel flowers over. Sprinkle pepper, nutmeg and salt over. Repeat the layers twice more. Cover with aluminum foil and bake in preheated 300 degree F. oven for about 3 hours.



Remove from oven, remove foil covering. Add vinegar. Stir well. Turn into a heated serving bowl. Keep warm on warming tray until ready to serve.

Garnish with remaining tablespoonful of fennel flowers before serving.

Yields 6 servings
adequate for 4 people

Notes: *Lovage-chive vinegar is a perfect choice for this dish. See *A Worldwide Vegetarian Journey to Discover the Foods That Nourish America's Immigrant Soul, Volume 1*, p. 240.

Although this slow, sweating process can easily be done using the SLOW COOKER, the overwhelming smell of cooking cabbage may be too much for you since it requires about 5 hours or more at LOW.

This recipe can be halved, when required. Use a 2-quart soufflé dish.

1/6 SERVING – PROTEIN = 3.1 g.; FAT = 2.3 g.; CARBOHYDRATE = 21.4 g.;
CALORIES = 108; CALORIES FROM FAT = 19%

*Incorporating umami, the fifth taste recognized by our taste receptors,
into dishes helps to increase the satisfaction that we feel as we eat,
often to an extent that will amaze you.
It is especially helpful to the creation of vegetarian meals.
I thought you might like to explore some recipes with me next month.*

Judy

Please note that all food value calculations are approximate and not the result of chemical analysis.