



Bok Choy

Or bok choy, or bak choy or pac choy. It doesn't matter what you call it, but do take time to try it. Several years ago it was a new vegetable to the Ladybug gardens and it has been a favored vegetable since that time. Bok Choy is a traditional stir-fry vegetable from China. Bok Choy's growing season is limited to the cooler weather of spring or fall and therefore you need to take advantage of its crisp, juicy flavor when it is available.

If you wish to plant some in your garden start transplants inside 4 to 6 weeks before last frost date. Lil' Ladybug carries a few transplants in the greenhouse if you do not want to start your own. Transplant the small plants 6 to 12 inches apart in rows 18 to 30 inches apart. Use the closer spacing for smaller varieties.

Bok Choy is a great nutritional gift and often touted as the garden vegetable highest in calcium. Whether this is the truth or not, you can be confident that Bok Choy is an excellent source of vitamins a, B-complex, C, and some minerals. All of this for only 24 calories per one-cup serving.

Recipes

I know Bok Choy is suppose to be a classic stir-fry but this is my favorite recipe.

Bok Choy Salad

Makes 4 servings

- 1/2 cup butter
- 2 packages ramen noodles
- 1/2 cup sunflower seeds
- 1/2 cup slivered almonds
- 1 large head bok choy
- 1/2 cup sliced green onions

DRESSING

- 1 tablespoon soy sauce
- 1/4 cup rice vinegar or white vinegar
- 1/2 cup sugar
- 1/2 cup oils

Melt butter or margarine. Add crumbled dry Ramen noodles, sunflower seeds and slivered almonds. Mix and brown mixture over medium heat stirring often. Set aside to cool. (This can be stored for later use.)

Chop Bok Choy and add green onion.

Combine and mix soy sauce, vinegar, sugar, and oil. Pour the dressing over the cabbage/onion

combination and add browned noodles just before serving, so they will stay crisp.

Grilled Pork Chops & Bok Choy With Sesame Garlic Glaze

Makes 4 servings

- 3 tablespoons soy sauce
- 1 1/2 tablespoons sesame oil
- 1 1/2 teaspoons bottled Vietnamese-style chili garlic sauce (bottled in Marinade section of grocery store)
- 4 pork chops - 5/8 inch thick
- 8 large stalks bok choy including greens (root ends trimmed)

Combine soy sauce, sesame oil, and chili garlic sauce in a large, deep plate or dish. Place pork chops in the mixture, turning to coat all surfaces. Let stand at room temperature, turning the chops occasionally, while you prepare coals in an outdoor grill to medium-high heat. When coals are ready, remove chops from the marinade and grill them until just done, 3-4 minutes per side. Meanwhile, grill the bok choy stalks until tender, about the same

amount of time as the chops, basting them with the remaining marinade while they cook. Serve with rice or an Asian noodle dish.

Lunchtime Bok Choy Fried Rice

Makes 2 servings

2 teaspoons peanut oil, divided

2 teaspoons sesame oil, divided

1/4 cup diced carrots

1 cup diced bok choy

1 1/2 cups leftover cooked rice chilled or at room temperature

1/2 cup leftover cooked diced chicken pork, beef, or lamb

1/2 teaspoon minced ginger

3 tablespoons chopped green onions

1 egg

Bottle chili garlic paste (optional)

1 1/2 tablespoons soy sauce

Heat a wok or cast-iron skillet over medium high flame a few minutes. Add 1 teaspoon each of the peanut and sesame oils; swirl to coat bottom of pan. Add carrots; stir-fry 2 minutes. Add bok choy; stir-fry 2 minutes. Push vegetables to outer edges of pan, add remaining peanut oil, and swirl to coat exposed surface. Add rice, meat, and ginger; stir-fry 2 to 3 minutes. Stir in the green onion. Push the mixture to the outside edges of the pan. Add the remaining sesame oil to the center of the pan, and swirl to coat exposed surface. Crack egg into the hot oil and scramble it. Cook until egg is set, then break up egg into pieces and toss it with the rest of the mixture in the pan. Add a little chili garlic paste, if desired, and stir in the soy sauce. Continue to stir-fry another moment or two, scraping all bits from the bottom of the pan. Serve hot.

STORAGE TIPS:

- Wrap bok choy in a damp towel or put it in a plastic bag and place in the hydrator drawer of the refrigerator.
- Store for up to 1 week. Leaves will lose integrity and wilt if allowed to dry out.

COOKING TIPS:

- For stir-fry, separate leaves from the thick white stem and chop both into 2-inch-wide diagonal chunks. The stem pieces should be added to the stir-fry several minutes before leaves, as they need more cooking time.
- Bok choy can complement a stir-fry with other vegetables, or can be the stir-fry. Try sautéing onions until they begin to soften. Then add bok choy stems, tofu chunks, soy sauce and grated ginger root. Add the bok choy leaves last. Serve with rice or noodles.
- Bok choy, like other leafy greens can be simply steamed. (Again, start stems cooking first.) Toss with a favorite marinade. Create an Asian flavor by tossing bok choy with a light coating of toasted sesame oil, soy sauce, and rice vinegar.