

Pei Tsai or Tokyo Bekana

From Tucson CSA Newsletter

Sweet and crunchy Tokyo Bekana is the most satisfying of stir-fry vegetables: easy (requires no peeling), crunchy, nutritious, quick-cooking—and you get two different vegetables (leaf and stem) for the effort of one. Tokyo Bekana is very low in calories—about 15 per ½ cup. It supplies plenty of vitamin C and vitamin A and a fair quantity of calcium.

Also called Pei Tsai, Tokyo Bekana is a Japanese version of Small Chinese Cabbage, but the texture of its leaves is actually more leafy like the green bok choy than crisp like cabbage. It does taste like cabbage, however, and lacks the strong earthiness of other greens such as chard, spinach, or beets. The crunchy stalks are smooth and flat and bear a vague resemblance to celery minus grooves or strings, and they have a mild, juicy sweetness that suggests romaine lettuce. Although you can eat Tokyo Bekana raw, cooking enhances it considerably, and it is excellent for stir-fry and soup. It takes just a few minutes to cook to a lovely crisp-tender texture. For stir-fries, there is nothing better: its stems turn almost creamy after cooking. Substitute Tokyo Bekana in any recipe that calls for the more commonly available bok choy.

Basic Pei Tsai Stir-Fry

Adapted from Elizabeth Schneider, Uncommon Fruits & Vegetables

Bright, healthy, flavorful, crunchy, quick-cooking: what more can you ask? This basic formula lends itself to additions of just about any vegetable that can be stir-fried: onion, scallion, carrot, red pepper, asparagus, mushrooms, corn, peas, or squash. Use either a wok or a large skillet. 3 or 4 servings

- 1-1/2 pounds Pei Tsai, leaves and stems separated
- 1-2 tablespoons peanut oil, to taste
- 1 teaspoon sugar
- ¼ teaspoon minced garlic
- Salt to taste

Cut stems at an angle into 1-inch pieces. Slice leaves separately. Have other ingredients ready. Heat wok or skillet; pour oil around the edge, then tip to distribute. Add stems and toss over moderately high heat until somewhat softened, but still crispy inside, about 3 minutes. Add sugar, garlic, salt, and reserved leaves, and toss until bok choy is crisp-tender, about 2 minutes.

Heirloom Beans

Easy Bean Salad

- 2 cups fresh green (or heirloom) beans, ends trimmed and halved
- 1 tablespoon white vinegar
- 1/4 cup tomato juice
- 2 teaspoon sugar
- 1/4 teaspoon dried leaf tarragon, crumbled

- 1 tablespoon finely minced or grated onion
- 3 tablespoon chopped pimiento
- salt and pepper to taste
- 2 hard cooked eggs, sliced
- lettuce leaves

Boil green beans in salted water until bright green, about 6 min. Drain and immerse in an ice bath. In a bowl, combine vinegar, tomato juice, sugar, tarragon, onion, pimiento, salt, and pepper in a bowl; mix well. Add cooled green beans and sliced eggs; toss lightly to blend. Chill thoroughly. Serve on lettuce leaves.

Green bean salad serves 4.

Tarragon Beans

- 4 cups fresh cut green (or heirloom) beans
- 1/2 cup water
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 1 large onion, chopped
- 1 celery rib, chopped
- 1/2 cup finely chopped green pepper
- 2 tablespoons margarine
- 3/4 teaspoon dried tarragon
- 1/2 teaspoon salt-free lemon-pepper seasoning
- pepper to taste

In a large saucepan, combine the beans, water and salt; bring to a boil. Reduce heat; cover and simmer for 15 minutes or until tender.

Meanwhile, in a small saucepan, saute the onion, celery and green pepper in margarine until tender. Stir in the tarragon, lemon-pepper and pepper. Drain beans; add vegetable mixture and toss to coat.

BEETS

Chilled Beet Soup

- 6 medium beets
- 2-3 bouillon cubes
- salt and freshly ground pepper
- 3 tablespoons olive oil
- 1 medium onion, chopped
- 3 cloves garlic, chopped
- Optional: herbs or crème fraiche

Place about 2 quarts of salted water, 6 beets and bouillon cubes in pot and boil for about an hour (until beets are cooked through).

Allow to beets to cool, peel skin off beets, and cut into quarters.

Warm olive oil in a large saucepan over medium heat. Stir in onions and garlic; cook until lightly browned, and allow to cool.

In batches, add sautéed onions, about 1 cup of beet stock, and cook beets in a blender, and pulse until liquefied.

Place back in pot and let cool in refrigerator. Ladle into bowls, and garnish herbs or crème fraiche.

Beet and Goat Cheese Salad with Pistachios

- 3 large red beets (1 2/3 lb without greens)
- 2 large golden beets (1 lb without greens)
- 1/4 cup minced shallot
- 2 tablespoons fresh lemon juice
- 3/4 teaspoon salt
- 1/4 teaspoon black pepper
- 1/4 cup pistachio oil
- 4 oz soft mild goat cheese
- 3 tablespoons salted shelled pistachios (not dyed red), coarsely chopped
- 1 oz mâche (also called lamb's lettuce), trimmed (4 cups)

Special equipment: a 2 1/2-inch round cookie cutter (without handle; at least 2 inches high)

Preheat oven to 425°F.

Separately wrap red and golden beets tightly in double layers of foil and roast in middle of oven until tender, 1 to 1 1/2 hours. Unwrap beets.

While beets are cooling slightly, whisk together shallot, lemon juice, salt, and pepper in a small bowl, then add oil in a stream, whisking.

When beets are cool enough to handle, slip off and discard skins. Separately cut red and golden beets into 1/4-inch dice and put in separate bowls. Add 2 1/2 tablespoons dressing to each bowl and toss to coat.

Farfalle with Beets, Beet Greens and Pine Nuts

- 1/3 cup pine nuts

- 4 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil, divided
- 2 large onions, quartered lengthwise through root end, sliced crosswise (about 4 cups)
- 3 garlic cloves, minced
- 2 bunches 2-inch-diameter golden beets with fresh healthy greens; beets peeled, each cut into 8 wedges, greens cut into 1-inch-wide strips
- 12 ounces farfalle (bow-tie pasta)
- 1/3 cup grated Parmesan cheese plus additional for serving

Heat heavy large skillet over medium heat. Add pine nuts and stir until lightly toasted, about 3 minutes. Transfer to small bowl. Add 2 tablespoons oil and onions to same skillet and sauté until beginning to soften and turn golden, about 10 minutes. Reduce heat to medium-low and continue to sauté until onions are tender and browned, about 30 minutes longer. Add garlic and stir 2 minutes. Scatter beet greens over onions. Drizzle remaining 2 tablespoons oil over; cover and cook until beet greens are tender, about 5 minutes.

Meanwhile, cook beets in large pot of boiling salted water until tender, about 10 minutes. Using slotted spoon, transfer beets to medium bowl. Return water to boil. Add pasta to beet cooking liquid and cook until tender but still firm to bite, stirring occasionally. Drain, reserving 1 cup pasta cooking liquid. Return pasta to pot.

Stir onion-greens mixture and beets into pasta. Add pasta cooking liquid by 1/4 cupfuls to moisten. Season with salt and coarsely ground black pepper. Stir in 1/3 cup Parmesan cheese. Divide pasta among shallow bowls. Sprinkle with pine nuts. Serve, passing additional cheese.

Traditional Apple Pie

Crust Ingredients

2 cups all-purpose flour, plus extra for rolling
 1/2 cup finely ground blanched almonds or almond flour (can substitute 1/2 cup flour if you don't have almonds)
 16 Tbsp (2 sticks) unsalted butter, cut into 1/2 inch cubes, chilled in freezer for at least 15 minutes
 1 teaspoon salt
 1 heaping teaspoon brown sugar
 3 to 6 Tbsp water, very cold

Filling Ingredients

2/3 cup sugar
 3 tablespoons all-purpose flour
 1/4 teaspoon ground allspice
 1/8 teaspoon nutmeg
 1/2 teaspoon cinnamon
 3 pounds of 1/4-1/2 inch thick slices of peeled and cored good cooking apples such as Granny Smith, Pippin, Golden Delicious (see cooking apple varieties)
 1 1/2 tablespoons brandy
 1 teaspoon vanilla extract

Egg Wash

1 large egg yolk
1 Tbsp cream

1 In a food processor, combine flour, almonds, salt and brown sugar, pulse to mix. Add butter and pulse 6 to 8 times, until mixture resembles coarse meal, with pea size pieces of butter. Add water 1 Tablespoon at a time, pulsing until mixture just begins to clump together. If you pinch some of the crumbly dough and it holds together, it's ready, if not, add a little more water and pulse again.

Remove dough from machine and place on a clean surface. Carefully shape into 2 discs. Do not over-knead the dough! You should still be able to see little bits of butter in the dough. These bits of butter are what will allow the result crust to be flaky. Wrap each disc in plastic wrap and refrigerate at least 1 hour.

2 Position rack in bottom third of oven and preheat to 375°F.

3 Combine sugar, flour and spices in large bowl. Use your hands and mix in the apples so they are well coated, then add brandy and vanilla extract.

4 Remove one crust disk from the refrigerator. Let sit at room temperature for 5-10 minutes. Sprinkle some flour on top of the disk. Roll out with a rolling pin on a lightly floured surface to a 12 inch circle; about 1/8 of an inch thick. As you roll out the dough, use a metal spatula to check if the dough is sticking to the surface below. Add a few sprinkles of flour if necessary to keep the dough from sticking. Gently fold in half. Place on to a 9-inch pie plate, lining up the fold with the center of the pan. Gently unfold and press down to line the pie dish with the dough.

5 Spoon in apple filling, mounding slightly in center.



6 Roll out second disk of dough, as before. Gently turn over onto the top of the apples in the pie. Pinch top and bottom of dough rounds firmly together. Trim excess dough with kitchen shears, leaving a 3/4 inch overhang. Fold dough under itself so that the edge of the fold is flush with the edge of the pan. Flute edges using thumb and forefinger or press with a fork.

7 Stir yolk and cream in small bowl to blend. Brush over top of pie. Cut slits in top crust to allow steam to escape. Bake pie until crust begins to turn golden, about 20 minutes, then reduce heat to 350°F. Tent the rims with aluminum foil or a pie protector if the edges are browning too quickly. Bake until crust is golden and juices are bubbling, anywhere from an additional 30 to 45 minutes,

depending on the type of apples you are using. Transfer to rack; let stand 1 hour. Serve pie warm or at room temperature.

Serves 8.