

Celery

Celery is a stem vegetable that is related to both parsley (which is cultivated for its leaves) and celeriac (which is cultivated for its root crown). Some farm-fresh celery may look and taste more vibrant than what you're accustomed to. This is because we don't blanch our celery plants by hilling soil around them to exclude light. Blanching would make for paler, juicier stalks—but our deep green, unblanched celery is especially wonderful for cooking. Save the light-colored, mild inner stalks for eating raw.

HANDLING

Separate the ribs and rinse them well. Trim off any roots and the leafy tips; save the leaves for soups and other dishes. Remove any strings from the outer stalks with a vegetable peeler or paring knife by making a shallow cut across the base of the stalk and pulling the strings up, up, and away.

Celery Salad with Walnuts and Gruyère

This salsa is simple enough to make for yourself at a moment's notice, and it's elegant enough to make as the salad course for a dinner party—just serve it over a bed of leaf lettuce. Our farm friend always gets asked about it: "Nobody invites me to potlucks anymore," she exclaims. "They invite my salad." *Friend of the Farm.*

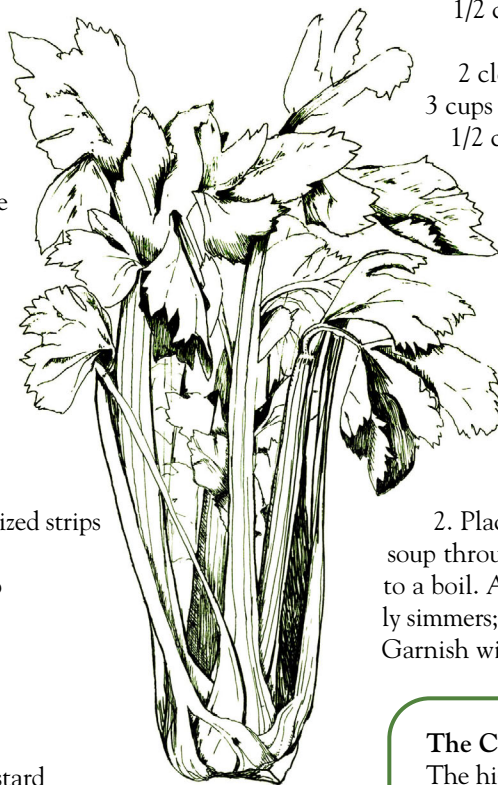
Serves 4

3 ribs celery, cut into matchstick-sized strips
1/2 cup chopped toasted walnuts
8 ounces Gruyère cheese, cut into matchstick-sized strips
1 teaspoon minced shallot
1 scallion, thinly sliced
salt
freshly ground black pepper
2 tablespoons prepared Dijon mustard
1 1/2 teaspoons freshly squeezed lemon juice
1/2 cup heavy cream
1 tablespoon finely chopped fresh parsley

1. Combine the celery, walnuts, Gruyère, shallot, and scallion in a large bowl. Add salt and pepper to taste.

2. Whisk the mustard and lemon juice in a small bowl. Add the cream in a stream, whisking constantly, until everything is well combined.

3. Pour the dressing over the celery mixture and toss gently but thoroughly. Sprinkle with the parsley.



STORAGE

Wrap unwashed celery tightly in a plastic bag or aluminum foil and place it in the coldest part of the refrigerator; it will keep for up to two weeks.

Creamy Celery Soup

Creamed soups are great comfort food, and they make a perfect course for whetting your appetite. For extra richness, substitute heavy cream for the milk. For a nice presentation and great texture, serve with homemade garlic croutons. *Angelic Organics Kitchen* (adapted from *Joy of Cooking*).

Serves 2 to 4

2 tablespoons butter
1 1/2 cups chopped celery with leaves (about 3 ribs)
1/2 cup thinly sliced leek (about 1 small-medium leek, white and green parts)
2 cloves garlic, minced (about 1 teaspoon)
3 cups chicken or vegetable stock
1/2 cup dry vermouth (optional)
2 cups milk
1/2 teaspoon salt
freshly ground black pepper
pinch freshly grated nutmeg
chopped fresh parsley

1. Melt the butter in a pot over medium-high heat. Add the celery, leek, and garlic; sauté for 2 minutes. Add the stock and vermouth; simmer until the celery is tender, 10 to 15 minutes.

2. Place a mesh strainer over a large bowl or pan. Strain the soup through the strainer. Return the soup to the pan and bring to a boil. Add the milk and reduce the heat so the mixture barely simmers; simmer for 5 minutes. Add the salt and pepper to taste. Garnish with parsley.

The Crop

The highlight of this morning was harvesting celery in the rain. I sank down deeper in the muddy bed with every raindrop, almost falling over when I tried to release my feet from the suction of the mud. Water was gushing past my boots. I tried to guess where the base of the celery plant was so I could negotiate my knife "above the roots and below the point where the stalks all connect together to make one swift, clean, non-damaging cut," as instructed in our harvest procedures. I then set my harvested celery down and watched it sink underwater; just the tips of the leaves showed to remind me where I should set the rest of my pile of ten before continuing down the bed. It was quite an adventure.

Excerpted from *Farmer John's Cookbook: The Real Dirt On Vegetables: Seasonal Recipes and Stories from a Community Supported Farm* by Farmer John Peterson & Angelic Organics (Gibbs Smith Publisher). Check with your local farm or bookstore for availability. Additional recipes, charts, individual copies of this book, and quantity discounts available at www.AngelicOrganics.com/cookbook.

