

Leeks

Leeks, which look like large, flat-leaved scallions, can seem intimidating and exotic in their green headdress. They are easy to use, and their delicate, irreplaceable flavor makes a meal special. The subtle, buttery taste of leeks imparts elegance to many dishes, including old standbys that call for onions.

HANDLING

Cut the leek about 1 inch above the white part, where the leaves begin changing from dark to light green. (Save the unused greens; they'll give great flavor to your next vegetable stock.) Fan the leaves under running water to dislodge any dirt collected there, then pat thoroughly dry. You can julienne a leek by cutting it lengthwise, or slice it crosswise.

If you want to clean a leek that you will be cooking whole, make a slit down one side to within an inch or two of the root end. Then spread the leaves under running lukewarm water to clean the leek. During cooking the leek will stay whole. When serving, arrange the leek with the cut side down.

Leek and Mushroom Sauce with Thyme over Pasta

Mushrooms and leeks work very well together. Although this is superb with wild mushrooms like chanterelles and morels, any more common kind, such as crimini or portabella, will do. *Angelic Organics Kitchen*.

Serves 2 to 4

- 1/2 pound mushrooms
- 1/2 pound fresh linguine or other thin pasta
- 2 tablespoons unsalted butter
- 2/3 cup chopped leeks (white and pale green parts only)
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 1/8 teaspoon black pepper
- 3 cloves garlic, minced or pressed (about 1 1/2 teaspoons)
- 1/3 cup dry white wine
- 2 teaspoons chopped fresh thyme
- freshly grated Parmesan cheese

1. Brush or briefly wash the mushrooms and cut them into thick slices, including the stems.
2. Cook the pasta according to the package directions. Drain well.
3. Meanwhile, melt the butter in a large pan over medium heat. Add the leeks, salt, and pepper; sauté for 5 minutes. Stir in the garlic. Cover; cook until the leeks are tender, about 5 more minutes.
4. Add the mushrooms and wine; gently simmer, uncovered, for 10 minutes.
5. Add the pasta and thyme to the mushroom mixture; toss well. Top with grated Parmesan.

STORAGE

Loosely wrap unwashed leeks in a plastic bag and store them in the vegetable bin of your refrigerator. They will keep for at least a week.

Caramelized Leek Salad with Pear, Cheese, and Toasted Walnuts

Sweet caramelized leeks together with ripe pears, toasted walnuts, and some good cheese conspire to make one of the best salads you will ever eat . . . ever. This is an ideal way to make a fantastic first impression at a dinner party—or simply to have lunch. *Angelic Organics Kitchen* (adapted from *Fields of Greens*).

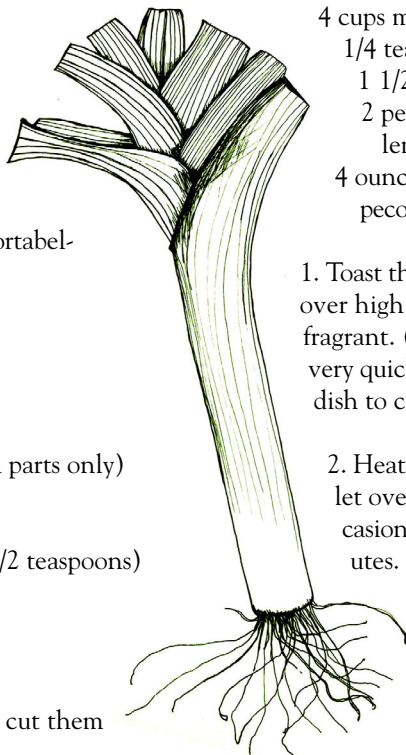
Serves 4

- 1/2 cup walnut halves
- 1 tablespoon unsalted butter
- 5 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil, divided
- 2 large leeks, white and green parts only, sliced (about 3 cups)
- 4 cups mixed salad greens
- 1/4 teaspoon salt
- freshly ground black pepper
- 1 1/2 tablespoons balsamic vinegar
- 2 pears, cored, sliced (you may want to sprinkle with lemon juice to keep from turning brown)
- 4 ounces cheese, crumbled or thinly sliced (chèvre, fresh pecorino, Parmesan, fontina, or smoked Gouda work well)

1. Toast the walnuts in a dry, heavy skillet (preferably cast iron) over high heat until they start to brown in spots and become fragrant. (Be careful not to overtoast them, as they will burn very quickly once toasted.) Immediately transfer the nuts to a dish to cool. Chop the nuts.

2. Heat the butter and 1 tablespoon of the oil in a large skillet over medium-low heat. Add the leeks; cook, stirring occasionally, until they are a deep golden color, about 45 minutes. Drain and cool.

3. In a large bowl, toss the salad greens with the salt and pepper to taste. Add the balsamic vinegar and toss; add the remaining olive oil and toss again. Divide the greens among four plates; sprinkle with the caramelized leeks and toasted walnuts. Arrange the pear slices on the leeks. Sprinkle with cheese.



A Shareholder

The produce continues to be beautiful and yummy and a pleasure to look forward to every week. This week we had delicious red sauces here, and the leek added a nice complexity to a mushroom risotto. Every once in a while my roommate and I mention how sad we will be with that last December delivery.

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.

