



Chard

SEASON: June through first frost (early October?)

GROWING: Chard stalks grow in a cluster, and can be harvested a few at a time throughout the whole growing season.

WHAT TO EXPECT: The big, crinkly leaves are like a sturdy spinach, with a more intense flavor; the stems are sweet and meltingly tender when cooked. This sweetness is a reminder that chard is a relative of beets, and you can cook their greens pretty much interchangeably.

VITAMINS AND MINERALS: High in vitamins A, E, C, and minerals iron, calcium.

STORAGE: Fresh chard kept in a loosely closed bag will keep in the fridge for about a week.

WHY BUY IT LOCALLY? The most obvious difference is in the stems, which crack, split at the bottom, and brown as they age and dry out. Greens go dull and droopy as they age, and begin to go yellow. Bet you won't see that on RI chard.



Cooking with Chard

PREPARATION

* A nice vigorous bath is the best way to get rid of soil that's gotten snuggled into a nice crinkly chard leaf. Fill a big bowl or pot with cool water and put the whole leaf in; run your hand over both sides of the leaf, and rub the stem, which often harbors some grit.

* Cutting: You can use stems and leaves as different vegetables, and even if eating both together, stems take longer to cook, so you may want to separate them so you can get stems started a little earlier. Fold leaf in half so the spine sticks out on one side and the greens are together on the other, and cut along the edge of the spine to separate leaf.

BASIC COOKING

* Like any leafy green, chop coarsely and sauté quickly in a little olive oil with garlic, hot pepper, onion, perhaps some diced ham or tomato.

* Stems: Cut into 1" lengths; steam, sauté, or boil briefly until tender - unbelievably sweet alone, also good with zucchini disks or cubed tomato.

SERVING IDEAS

* Use chard leaves, wilted for 2 minutes in boiling water, in place of cabbage leaves for stuffed chard, with a filling mixed of your choice of grains, meat, veggies, beans, cheese, herbs.

* Very young chard is excellent raw - you may spot it in salad mixes, or you can shred a few leaves into a hearty chefs salad or one with fruit.

AN ACTUAL RECIPE - Chard tart

1 cup whole wheat flour pinch of salt $\frac{1}{4}$ cup water $\frac{1}{4}$ c olive oil

1 bundle chard (about a pound), prepped and chopped 3 eggs

1 cup grated hard cheese (parmesan, asiago, pecorino, gruyère, etc)

* Mix flour, salt, & water briefly, then add oil. Mix until it's a uniform dough. Press with fingers into an 8-9" pie dish or tart pan, making sure there are no holes & that it goes up the sides. Put chard in a skillet over low heat, stirring until it wilts & its juices have cooked off (just a couple minutes). Mix eggs, cheese, chard, & salt and pepper; pour into crust.

Bake 30-45 minutes (varies with pan) until center is firm & golden.

Thanks for buying local!

Don't forget tree-ripe RI peaches for dessert