

News Column – Donna Krug, Family and Consumer Agent and District Director – Cottonwood Extension District – Great Bend Office

I had fun pulling together the handout material for my recent 4<sup>th</sup> Friday program at the Great Bend Senior Center, titled, “Field to Fork.” I wanted to highlight the wonderful produce available at our Farmer’s Markets, so I stopped by the day before my program and found just what I was looking for. I found fresh beets and kohlrabi that would be fun to share the next day. I turned to one of my favorite resources, The Rolling Prairie Cookbook, by Nancy O’Connor, for a description and recipes using these fun vegetables.

If your beets come with the greens attached, so much the better – you have two vegetables. Before storing in the refrigerator cut the greens off the root, leaving approximately two inches of greens attached to the crown to prevent bleeding. For longer storage life, do not wash your beets before you refrigerate them, as wet beets tend to rot.

Preparing beets is simple. They are delicious and gorgeous when eaten raw. Peel and coarsely grate as an addition to salads or to add crunch and variety to sandwiches. Baking beets with the skins on or steaming beets are also great ways to prepare beets. One of my favorite recipes in O’Connors book is for “Quick Grated Beets.” Begin by washing, peeling and coarsely grating 4 medium sized beets. Heat 1 tablespoon olive oil in a skillet. Add beets, and stir to coat well. Sprinkle with 1-3 tablespoons fresh lemon juice, cover and cook for approximately 10 minutes. Stir occasionally and add water or vegetable stock to prevent scorching. Cook until just tender and season with salt and pepper. You can also sprinkle with fresh dill or parsley before serving.

Kohlrabi is a bit more unusual. It can be one of those intimidating vegetables. It has the look of an organic green Sputnik, with a taste like fresh, crunchy, broccoli stems accented by radish. It is a round bulb with a swollen stem that grows aboveground. The bulbs should be stored, unwashed, in a plastic bag. They will hold for about a week in the refrigerator. Smaller kohlrabi are the sweetest and most tender. Bulbs much bigger than the size of a tennis ball won’t be as tasty and often have a pithy flesh.

Tender, young kohlrabi is delicious eaten raw. Peel the outer skin with a paring knife. Slice, dice, or grate and add to salads. Use on raw vegetable platters or serve with a creamy dip. Substitute in recipes calling for radishes. Over the holiday weekend I grated a kohlrabi and John added it to a vegetable stir fry. Kohlrabi can also be steamed or boiled. For this preparation, don’t peel until after they are cooked.

Whatever vegetable you find at farmer’s market, you are sure to enjoy putting something locally grown on your plate. If you missed the program “Field to Fork” and would like to have a handout with recipes, just give me a call or send me an e-mail. See you at the market!

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