



The green bean

The green bean originally came from South America where it had been cultivated for its seeds, often eaten dried, for some 7000 years. This fruit of the fabaceae family arrived in Europe in the 17thC. Two centuries later, the Italians innovated the harvesting of it whole, seed and pod, before it reached full maturity.

Two main varieties are available on the market : 'French' green beans : long, slender and dark green. They are harvested young, before developing stringy fibres.

Mange-tout beans : large and fleshy, they are not fibrous and are green or yellow. They are tender and soft and notable among them is the yellow 'haricot beurre' which has an almost melt-in-the-mouth texture.

Choice

Green beans are harvested from May to September. Choose fine, firm ones with a good, uniform colour. When bent they should snap cleanly and give out a drop of water when really fresh.

Consumption

Before using them, they need topping and tailing and possibly stringing too : break off both ends and pull off any threads from the sides. They can be eaten cold in salads ; in fact they are indispensable in the famous Salade Nicoise, star of the mediterranean diet, with sweet peppers, anchovies, olives..Hot and just simply enlivened with garlic and parsley, they make a light and tasty accompaniment for meat and fish.

Conservation

Keep for 2-3 days in the vegetable drawer of a refrigerator in a perforated plastic bag so they can 'breathe'. You can freeze or dry them once they have been blanched.



Beans became a staple food for students, prisoners and the unemployed. When they no longer had even the means to buy this stodgy food it meant the situation was really hopeless : 'I haven't got a bean'.



Adequately digestible but not very nourishing or energy giving (**38kcal/100g**), they are rich in fibre and in provitamin A.



PREPARATION

Only wash fresh green beans just before cooking them.



COOKING

Either steam or boil them in 2-3 times their volume of salted water for no more than 4-5 mins to preserve their colour and an 'al dente' texture. Any longer and they will become starchy..qu'il renferme.



PRESENTATION

To keep their bright green colour, all you need to do is to drain them, then plunge them into iced water and drain them again.

This way, the chlorophyll that they contain is sealed in and stays a beautiful green colour.

RECIPE SUGGESTIONS

- Stir fry of lamb and hazelnuts with braised green beans

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