Radishes come in a rainbow of colors that inspire names, such as Cherry Belle, Easter Egg and Plum Purple. The red globes typically found in the grocery store are fine, too, but who can resist the array of colors and shapes appearing in the farmers' markets in spring and early summer?

The radish is a member of the cabbage family. Similar to turnips, the greens are edible. Although we often think of the radish as a root vegetable, the colorful globe or white elongated portion is actually the swollen lower stem of the radish plant.

Small radishes are called summer varieties — somewhat of a misnomer since radishes become harsh and pithy in the heat of summer. Winter varieties (daikon is the most common) are less colorful and are much bigger. All varieties, when grown quickly in cool weather, are crisp, juicy and peppery.

To assure you get home with young tender radishes, choose the ones that are solid and smooth with an unblemished surface, and with the bright green tops still attached. With the exception of daikons, oversized radishes are often tough, stringy and strong in flavor. Before you buy, gently squeeze one — if it feels spongy or gives at all, it is likely hollow or fibrous, ready for the compost pile.

Radishes keep best if you cut off the greens before storing them in a plastic bag. Refrigerated, they will keep for five to seven days. If you plan to use the greens, store them in a plastic bag separate from the radishes. The greens will keep only two or three days.

Fresh, sweet radishes need only a sprinkling of salt to enhance their peppery flavor. Most of the enzyme responsible for radish’s peppery-ness is found in the skin. If you get a batch that is too hot for your taste, you can peel away all or part of the skin to make them more palatable. Or cook them (to inactivate the enzyme) to transform their flavor in a surprising way.

By Peggy Crum, RD, Health4U Nutritionist

Braised Radishes with Herbs

Recipe developed by Corporate Chef Kurt Kwiatkowski and featured in Residential Dining Services. Serves 4

- 2 Tablespoons butter
- 3 Tablespoons diced shallot
- 1 teaspoon minced garlic
- 1 pound radishes (trim away greens and tips)
- 1 cup vegetable stock
- 2 Tablespoons heavy cream
- 1 Tablespoon minced chives
- ¼ cup fresh chopped sorrel (substitute fresh spinach or flat leaf parsley for sorrel; if so, add a little lemon zest with final seasoning)
- Salt and pepper to taste

Braising is a two-part cooking method:

- First, brown food quickly in very hot fat.
- Second, simmer food in liquid at a low temperature for an extended time.

Place butter in a large skillet over medium heat and then sauté the shallots for two to three minutes. Cut smaller radishes into halves and larger radishes into quarters. Add radishes to the pan and sauté for two minutes. Add garlic and sauté for one minute.

Deglaze the pan with the stock, scraping the bits of vegetables stuck to the pan. Add heavy cream. Heat liquid, and simmer for 12 to 15 minutes or until radishes are fork tender. Make sure to stir at least two to three times during braising.

Add chives and chopped sorrel to reduced and thickened sauce. Simmer for two minutes. Add salt and pepper to taste. Remove from heat and serve immediately.

Braised Radishes with Herbs will be served for lunch at Brody Square, Holden, Holmes, Landon, Shaw and The Gallery at Snyder/Phillips on May 5. Visit www.eatatstate.com for dining hall hours and menus.

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