

SESAME BEEF AND ASPARAGUS STIR-FRY

Adapted from fromachefskitchen.com

Steak and marinade:

¾ lb flank, skirt, or sirloin steak, thinly sliced	1 Tbsp oyster sauce
1 Tbsp soy sauce	1 Tbsp toasted sesame oil
1 Tbsp dry white wine	1 Tbsp light brown sugar
2 tsp toasted sesame oil	1 Tbsp minced ginger
2 cloves garlic, minced	4 cloves garlic, minced
1 tsp minced ginger	1 tsp crushed red pepper
	1 ½ Tbsp cornstarch
<u>Sauce:</u>	<u>Stir fry:</u>
1 c beef broth	2 Tbsp canola oil
⅓ c soy sauce	1 bunch asparagus, in 2" pieces
2 Tbsp rice vinegar	1 bunch scallions, in 2" pieces
	1 Tbsp toasted sesame seeds (garnish)

1. Combine beef and marinade ingredients in a bowl. Toss. Let sit 30 minutes.
2. Combine sauce ingredients in a bowl and set aside.
3. Heat oil in a wok or saute pan over medium-high heat. Add asparagus and cook 1-2 minutes, stirring constantly. Add scallion pieces and cook 1 minute more. Transfer to bowl.
4. Add remaining oil and brown the beef strips on both sides, working in batches. Transfer to the bowl with vegetables.
5. Pour sauce mixture into the pan and bring to a boil. Cook 1-2 minutes or until thickened. Add beef and vegetables back to the pan to heat through. Serve immediately over rice or noodles. Garnish with sesame seeds.

ROASTED RADISHES WITH GARLIC CHIVE YOGURT

Adapted from whipandwander.com

1 lb radishes, halved or whole	<u>Yogurt:</u>
1 Tbsp olive oil	1 c full-fat Greek yogurt
1 tsp kosher salt	¼ c chives, minced
½ tsp black pepper	¼ tsp garlic powder
¼ tsp garlic powder	¼ tsp salt
	¼ tsp black pepper
	zest of 1 lemon (garnish)

1. Preheat oven to 425F. Line baking pan with parchment.
2. Add radishes to pan, then top with olive oil, salt, pepper, and garlic powder. Toss until evenly coated, the spread radishes in even layer.
3. Roast 20-25 minutes or until lightly golden.
4. Add yogurt ingredients to medium bowl. Fold until well-combined.
5. Spoon yogurt into even layer on large plate or platter. Place radishes atop yogurt and garnish with lemon zest.



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Rhubarb: Technically a vegetable, not a fruit, rhubarb stalks may have green and/or pink coloration when ready to eat. Store stalks in a plastic bag and keep in the crisper drawer of the refrigerator up to one week. Try it pickled, made into jam, frozen, or used fresh.

Leafy Greens: Store leafy greens in the fridge in a perforated plastic bag. If you chop and wash ahead of time, spin the leaves dry before putting back in the bag with a dry paper towel to absorb moisture. Refresh as needed by plunging them in ice water 15-20 minutes.

Sweet Potato: Store at room temperature. Refrigeration will cause them to harden and blacken when cooked. Check weekly and use any that may soften, most will keep for weeks or months.

Radishes: Remove the radish from the greens. Store roots separate from greens in plastic bags in the fridge. Try roots sliced on salads or roasted. The greens can be used like other leafy cooking greens.

Asparagus: Best eaten as fresh as possible. To store, stand asparagus in jar with about 1 inch of water, making sure ends are sitting in the water. Loosely cover with a plastic bag and refrigerate up to one week.

Underground Jungle

Plant roots are the unsung heroes of organic farming systems. Their structures are just as diverse as the above-ground plant parts that most of us are more familiar with. The intricacies of their interactions with the soil and the underground food web are the driving force of the food we eat. Let's take a peek at what is going on down there.

When a seed wakes up and germinates, the initial root, called a radicle, breaks through the protective coating of that seed. This baby root feeds off the energy stored inside the seed as it naturally turns downward in search of moisture and nutrients, which the plant uses to begin developing its first leaves. As the spike-like root spears deeper into the ground, small branches begin to spread laterally which help the plant anchor itself. It may not need it now, but the anchoring is in preparation for the time when the above-ground stem, leaves, flowers and fruits will be tossed around by rain and wind.

As the plant matures, the root structure will develop in a pattern unique to its genetic code. Generally speaking, there are two basic types of root systems: tap and fibrous. Taproots have a dominant shaft that dives deep into the soil (think dandelion), while fibrous root systems are a series of uniformly-sized structures that fan out into the soil (think grass). Taproots not only physically penetrate through denser sub-surface soils, even tighter clay profiles, but they are able to bring nutrients up to the surface that otherwise not be available to the plant. Fibrous-type structures send their tentacles in all directions in search of nutrients and moisture. We use these differences to our advantage when planting cover crops and designing rotations.

Water goes into the plant through the roots and exits through the leaves in a process called transpiration. The leaves then send the energy captured via photosynthesis down to the roots to power their work. Here is where it gets very interesting. Anytime top growth of a plant is removed, an equivalent amount of root growth dies because there is no longer enough food coming from the leaves to sustain the root structure at its current size. When these dead roots decay, they feed the bacteria and fungi that feed on such decomposing plant material. It also leaves a small void in the soil for air to move deeper into the ground, oxygenating those same microbes. There are tens of thousands of species of bacteria and fungi, each with unique growth and feeding requirements. Some like it hot, others cold; some wet, others dry; some high pH, others low. This cycle of new root growth and subsequent decay feeds them, and this is how we build soil.

The interface between roots and the soil they live in is wildly intricate. The roots are not selfish with the nutrients they get from up top; they exude a nutrient-

dense solution back into the soil, which further energizes the microbial flora and fauna around them. This symbiotic relationship is best seen with a class of fungi known as mycorrhizae. These filamentous fungi attach themselves to the roots, then form microscopic threads all through the soil, extracting specific nutrients like calcium, phosphorus, and magnesium. The fungus then sends those nutrients to the root, which in turn sends them to the leaves or fruits we eat. The roots cannot capture these minerals on their own. Healthy soils are said to contain 20 miles of mycorrhizae fungi in a single teaspoon. When a plant has access to the specific nutrients it needs to thrive, it can fend off disease and pestilence. Mother Nature created this symbiotic relationship all on her own, so all a farmer needs to do is engineer the environment to help both the fungus and the plant stay healthy. This is the genesis of organic principles.

By managing the types of plants we grow in certain locations, we can have some influence over the nutrient content of the soil. Within this complex synergistic nutrient-sharing system, there is a communication feedback loop that is a bit counter-intuitive. For example, weeds that have a relatively higher concentration of zinc than other species, will grow in an area low in zinc. By doing so, the mycorrhizae and root systems will mine the soil for zinc and send it to the top of the plant. When the weed dies because it is pulled, mowed, or tilled under, the zinc is deposited on the surface of the soil, therefore correcting the zinc deficiency in the soil. When we know which plants are feeders (takers) and fixers (givers) of certain nutrients, our crop rotation choices mean we cycle those nutrients back into the soil in a way that keeps the whole ecosystem healthy.

So you see, the roots are much more than structural necessities. The wildly diverse and symbiotic jungle of plant tissue, microbes, and insects cohabitate to create healthy plants. Please take a moment to consider that the produce you receive each week is just as nature intended. With a little help from us. — Mac Stone

This is the
SECOND TO LAST WEEK
of the Winter/Spring season!

Don't forget to sign up for the summer season:
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