



TUV HASHAVUA: Best of the Week

Root to Stalk Cooking: The Art of Using the Whole Vegetable *by Sarah Henry*

Where others see discards destined for the compost bin, *San Francisco Chronicle* food writer Tara Duggan sees potential culinary gems destined for her dinner table. She practices what her husband has nicknamed "compost cookery," but she's no zealot - despite occasionally rescuing broccoli bits from the family kitchen's green bin. "Broccoli leaves are delicious and have this silky quality, and broccoli stalks, stripped of their fibrous outer layer, are the sweetest part of the vegetable," says Duggan. "When we don't eat the whole vegetable we miss out on all these flavors and textures."

Clearly, Duggan delights in getting the most out of her vegetables. And she shares her tips, tricks, and recipes in her latest cookbook, *Root to Stalk Cooking: The Art of Using the Whole Vegetable*, which celebrates carrot tops, fennel fronds, leek greens, and other so-called vegetable scraps often overlooked by home cooks. Hot on the heels of the nose-to-tail meat butchery and cookery trend, veg-centric cookbooks seem to be giving meat-focused recipe collections a run for their money right now.

Duggan was ahead of the curve. The James Beard award-winning writer and San Francisco California Culinary Academy graduate first wrote about root-to-stalk cooking in a story for the *Chronicle* in 2009, when she discovered that Bay Area restaurant chefs were not just using Swiss chard stems and turnip greens, they were bragging about it too. Since then, she's seen local chefs step up their scrap artistry and home cooks becoming increasingly curious about using the whole vegetables they find at farmers' markets, in CSA boxes, or in their own backyards.

It turns out, there are many reasons to eat more of our vegetables. First, there is thrift - of both the economic and ecological kind. Since Duggan spends time and has written about her brother and sister-in-law's off-the-grid Windy Hollow Farm, she is acutely aware of the energy and labor that goes into growing produce in the first place. "If we use carrot tops as an herb rather than buy a bunch of parsley, or cook beet greens rather than pick up a bunch of chard, that's one less plant that has to be watered, fertilized, harvested, transported, and refrigerated, not to mention one less thing to buy," she notes. And Duggan abhors food waste, a widespread problem in both professional and domestic kitchens. In her book,

Columnist Sarah Henry is an epicurean tour guide for San Francisco's EdibleExcursions, and is the voice behind the blog Lettuce Eat Kale and tweets under that moniker too. This article was originally published in the KQED blog: blogs.kqed.org

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THANK YOU TO OUR VOLUNTEERS

10/15 PICK-UP [B Week]

Esfir Kandinov

Yelena Simkhayeva

Liliya Simkhayeva

FOOD BANK DELIVERY:

Marta Blythe

10/22 PICK-UP [A Week]

Margaret Richards

Emily Poblocki

Mindy Weinblatt

Rena Lefkowitz

FOOD BANK DELIVERY:

David Snyder



Golden Earthworm's Harvest Festival: Sunday, 10/20, 11am-3pm FREE to all CSA members and their families. Hay rides, walking tours, kids' activities, music, food demos (including one by our co-chair, ALEXA WEITZMAN). RAIN OR SHINE!

goldenearthwormfarm.squarespace.com

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[B] WHAT'S IN THE BOX?

Green Cabbage
Romaine Lettuce
Scallions
Baby Toscano
Kale
Baby Lettuces
Cilantro
Red Peppers
Cherry
Tomatoes

FRUIT SHARE

Apples:
Mutsu,
Jonagold,
Red
Delicious

NOTE:
Herb shares ended last week

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Duggan quotes from a three-decade study conducted by the Garbage Project at the University of Arizona, that found American households discard 25% of their total groceries.

But her underlying motivation for writing *Root to Stalk Cooking*: finding more flavors from the foods we know and already buy. “Finely chopped carrot tops in a salsa verde add just a delicious hint of bitterness,” says Duggan. “Beet greens have a very subtle flavor, different from the actual beet, so using the greens can elevate a dish and give a cook more depths of layers to work with.”

“Before I researched the book I thought leek greens were inedible. Every recipe you read calls for cutting off leek greens and discarding them,” she says. “But it turns out they make a nice braising green with an onion flavor and a silky texture.” And she had her share of flops: Duggan had little luck turning corn silk into anything edible and her tests with basil stem oil only resulted in a product that was grassy and bitter.

Of course, parts of some produce are downright dangerous to eat.

For example, rhubarb or tomato leaves are poisonous. Some restaurants include peach leaves on their menus, but Duggan ran into accounts of children dying from drinking peach leaf tea in her research. So, she decided to steer clear of them in her recipes.

Duggan thinks the recent ramped-up interest in whole-vegetable cookery is due to the discovery of the potential for flavor in vegetables, “There’s a universe of unique tastes we have not utilized and accessed till now.” 

THE COOK'S TREATS

CSA member Judith Mermelstein confesses, “I use celery leaves in my chicken soup; I save them in the freezer. I also eat celery and lettuce hearts when I prepare the other parts of the vegetables, and my fave food of all time (besides chocolate and blueberries) is when I find a pepper seed that has sprouted into a mini-pepper inside the larger one. Heaven! I also eat broccoli stalks while preparing the florets.”

Ch’ing Ts’ai Ma Ku T’ang: Mushrooms & Brassica Soup

Florence Lin’s Chinese Cookbook | Serves 4
 This austere sounding soup is actually really delicious and makes use of stems and bits you might otherwise toss out. At 35 calories per serving, enjoy liberally!

- 1 tbsp vegetable oil
- 1 cup sliced mushrooms (or stems)
- 2 cups cabbage, cut in 1-inch chunks (can use stems – see note below)
- 3 cups water
- salt

Heat oil in a pot and cook mushrooms till softened. Add cabbage and toss till coated. Add water and bring to a boil. Cook uncovered till cabbage is tender, about 3 minutes. Season to taste with salt, and serve.

Note: Mustard greens, bok choy, napa cabbage, watercress, lettuce, kale stems, etc. may be used instead of cabbage. This is a good recipe to use up the harder stems – adjust cooking time as needed.

MAKING THE MOST OF EVERY PIECE OF PRODUCE –Tara Duggan

Here are some suggestions about how to use some vegetable and fruit trimmings typically tossed out by home cooks. And a tip in advance: Use leaves, fronds, and greens –the parts of a vegetable that tend to wilt quickly – as soon as possible after buying or harvesting. A beet can last for some time in the refrigerator, for instance, but beet greens are at their best when freshly picked.

Apple Peels and Cores: Work wonders to infuse bourbon.

Asparagus Stems: Snap, save, freeze, and then use to make stock for asparagus soup.

Broccoli Stalks: Cut off and discard the tough outer peel of the stalk and then shave the remains into paper-thin strips with a vegetable peeler and serve as a salad green / garnish.

Carrot Tops: Finely chop as a parsley substitute in Italian salsa verde. Taste test for bitterness and use judiciously.

Cauliflower Stems and Leaves: Cut into the whole head and through the stem to make cauliflower “steaks,” which respond well to caramelizing. Add cauliflower leaves at the end.

Celery Leaves and Inner Stalks: Add stalks to slaw or use in asparagus soup for an added flavor dimension; mix celery leaves in salad for extra crunch.

Chard Stalks: Bake stalks with cream, cheese and bread crumbs for a gratin. Pickle them for a crunchy, chutney-like relish or puree for hummus.

Fava Beans: Grill them whole until the beans steam through their normally tough outer shells. Toss in olive oil and salt; eat, peels and all.

Fennel Stalks: Candy fennel stalks, for a chewy, anise-flavored treat. Fennel stalk syrup fills in nicely for simple syrup in drinks. Steep in vodka for 2 weeks for a home-made anisette liquor.

Lemon Skins: Dry zest then add to vinaigrettes, fruit salads, meat braises, cakes, or anything that benefits from a little citrus boost.

Potato Peels: Deep fry, season with salt and paprika. Enjoy.

Radish Leaves: Add to salads for a peppery end note.