

MEI QUING CHOI



MEI QUING CHOI is also known as “baby pak choi”. This is deceiving, though, as mei quing choi is not an immature pak choi plant. Mei quing choi is actually a dwarf variety that differs from pak choi in several ways. The stalks of mei quing choi are a light green color, while those of pak choi are white. Mei quing choi grows best in the mild weather of the spring and fall. The plant grows very quickly (in about 5-6 weeks), so there may be many harvests within a given season.

STORAGE

- ◆ This delicate green should be **eaten as soon as possible**, but will keep for several days loosely packed in a plastic container in the refrigerator drawer.

PREPARATION

- ◆ Wash mei quing choi well before using.
- ◆ **Both the leaves and the tender stems are edible.** Cut off the base of the plant and cook this way or slice the stems and leaves into small pieces first.
- ◆ Mei quing choi can be eaten **raw** in a salad, or break off the stems at the base and serve the leaf and stem as part of a vegetable platter.
- ◆ The stalks of the plant will take longer than the leaves to cook, so add them first to stir-fries, **sautés, or soups**. When they begin to soften, add the leaves until just wilted (about 1 minute).

Mei quing choi is best served tender-crisp to retain its sweet, nutty flavor, so try not to overcook.

Nutritional Information

Mei quing choi is high in Vitamins A and C. Vitamin A is important in vision, growth and development, skin health, immune function and reproduction. Vitamin C is important in immune response, wound healing, and allergic reactions. Vitamin C also helps with iron absorption.

Mei Quing Choi Recipes

Mei Quing Choi Stir Fry (Serves 4)

Sauce:

- 1 inch piece fresh ginger root
- 1/2 cup soy sauce
- 1/2 cup dry sherry
- 2 Tablespoons brown sugar or honey
- 1/4 cup rice vinegar
- Pinch of cayenne (optional)

- 1 tablespoon vegetable oil
- 1 head mei quing choi, divided into leaves and stems

In a small saucepan, combine sauce ingredients, bring to a boil. Reduce heat and simmer for one minute. Set aside to cool. In a sieve or colander, strain sauce to remove ginger root. In heavy frying pan or wok, heat oil until very hot. Add mei quing choi stems, and cook until almost tender. Then add leaves and cook until wilted. Add sauce to taste, toss to combine. Serve over cooked rice or as a side dish. Any extra sauce will keep indefinitely, if refrigerated, and can be used on vegetables, tofu, rice and fish dishes.

Recipe adapted from Moosewood Restaurant Cooks at Home by the Moosewood Collective, copyright 1994 by Simon & Schuster.



Mei Quing Choi Miso Soup

- 3 cups chopped mei quing choi
- 1 onion, diced
- 2 strips kombu (sea vegetable), soaked and shredded
- 1/2 pound tofu cut into 1/2 inch cubes
- 2 quarts vegetable stock
- 1 tablespoon miso paste
- chopped green onions for a garnish

In soup pot, combine mei quing choi, onion, tofu and vegetable broth. Bring to a boil, reduce heat and simmer for 15 minutes. Reduce heat to low, add miso and heat 1 minute (do not boil). Garnish with green onions and serve.

Recipe adapted from A. Doncsecz, Vegetarian Gourmet, Spring 1993, courtesy of Madison Area Community Supported Agriculture Coalition.



Greens Adobo (Serves 4)

- 2 Tablespoons canola oil
- 3 garlic cloves, sliced
- 5 cups mei quing choi, stems and leaves chopped separately
- 2 tablespoons soy sauce
- 1 Tablespoon white vinegar
- black pepper to taste

In a wok or heavy frying pan, over high flame, heat oil. Add garlic, stir-fry until golden. Using a spoon, remove garlic from oil and reserve. Add chopped mei quing choi stems and cook until almost tender. Add chopped leaves and cook until wilted (add a spoonful or so of water if the leaves begin to stick). Turn off heat, and stir in soy sauce, vinegar and pepper. Return the garlic to the pan and stir. Serve over rice if desired.

Recipe adapted from Sundays at Moosewood Restaurant by the Moosewood Collective, copyright 1990 by Simon & Schuster

