

Vibrant Green Broad Beans

It's spring and it's time for broad beans. Buy up big because after shelling you will have quite a pile for the compost heap and a more modest bowl of podded beans. To enjoy the real beauty of this vegetable don't stop at this point, plunge the beans in boiling water for one minute, drain and cool under running water. The outer skin of the beans will now be a bit wrinkly and easily nipped with your thumb nail at one end, allowing the bright green jewels to slip out with a gentle squeeze from the other end. The tough outer casing is why so many people dislike this vegetable; many having unpleasant childhood memories of the wrinkled, grayish beans next to the Sunday roast. Give them another chance, double peel them and enjoy the vibrant green. Once double peeled the broad beans can be tossed into salads, added to a risotto in the last few minutes, gently heated with olive oil, garlic and herbs as a stand alone vegetable or further mixed with pasta, crispy bacon bits or goats cheese. Broad beans go well with mint, lemon zest, sorrel, crispy fried sage leaves, tarragon or rosemary and, in the absence of seasonal pomegranates, the bright green discs can enliven a Middle Eastern grain salad. If you have a surfeit from the veggie patch or have pods that are no longer their spring best, cook the doubled peeled beans until they just start to break down and blend into a paste with mint, garlic, lemon, salt and olive oil to pile onto bruschetta.

If you want to go a step further add some ricotta to the paste and use as a filling for ravioli or agnolotti del pin, a simple version of ravioli made with a little pinch.



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