

FENNEL, BRONZE



Foeniculum vulgare 'Rubrum'
[fen-ik-yoo-lum vul-GAIR-ee]

Family: Umbelliferae

Description: Bronze fennel looks like the common fennel, but its foliage is a striking greenish bronze. The plant retains the culinary versatility of its cousin, but because of its interesting foliage, it also works well in the flower border. It can grow 6 feet tall. Black and yellow Swallowtail butterflies absolutely love this and the other Fennels.

Cultivation: Bronze fennel can grow to 6 feet tall and several feet wide. In areas with cold-winter climates, it can be grown as an annual. Plant in full sun in well-drained, average soil. In hot climates it prefers some afternoon shade. It takes average watering and minimal fertilizing, and when established the herb is drought-tolerant. In the southern belt, fennel tends to bolt prematurely in the heat of the

summer. Cut back flowering umbels after they have bloomed to keep the plant shapely. Sow seeds in early spring or fall. Seeds from established plants readily self-sow.

History: Language of Flowers: Worthy Of All Praise

Culinary Uses: Use it as a cooked vegetable. Also good in salads. Seeds are used in hot breads, spiced beets and kraut. One of the most fragrant uses for bronze fennel is to make of the dried stems a bed for an entire fish held in a fish rack and grilled over an open fire. Get into the habit of saving the snippings for this manner of cooking fish when you prune fennel. Finely chopped the herb is excellent with all kinds of fish, especially salmon, as its pink flesh looks attractive contrasted with dark fennel. Bronze fennel is also a good companion for chicken and pork. Vegetables benefit from its anise taste, which is milder than that of its green relative. Carrots, potatoes, peas and beets—especially the red and white candy-striped Chioggia beets, and golden beets—taste good and look pretty with chopped bronze fennel leaves. Its own green leaves and bronze fennel's, makes an attractive presentation. A short feathery frond of bronze fennel is a striking garnish for a salad of jicama matchsticks.

Recipes:

Baked Golden Beets with Bronze Fennel Butter

Fennel-Orange Butter
2 Tbsp softened unsalted butter
2 tsp finely chopped bronze fennel
½ tsp freshly squeezed orange juice
6 golden beets, about 2 lbs
1 tsp orange zest
sea salt and cayenne pepper to taste

finely chopped bronze fennel

To make the fennel-orange butter, combine the butter and bronze fennel in a small bowl. Cream together until well blended, then add the orange juice. Allow the butter to rest for 30 minutes while the flavor infuses. Preheat oven to 375. Brush the beets clean of any soil, and place them on a baking sheet lined with aluminum foil. Bake for about 1 hour, or until a fork easily pierces the beets. Cool slightly, then remove the skins and tops. Slice the beets ¼ inch thick. Melt the orange fennel butter in a large saucepan and add the orange zest. Add the golden beets, and coat them thoroughly with the butter, stirring until heated through. Add salt and pepper to taste. To serve, sprinkle with chopped bronze fennel. (Exotic Herbs)

Apricots with Anisette and Bronze Fennel

3 lb Fresh apricots

2½ c Water

½ c Anisette

2 cup Sugar

4 6 inch sprigs fresh bronze fennel

Prepare jars, lids and boiling water bath. Wash and dry the apricots, then prick each one several times. Combine the water, anisette and sugar in a pan and cook over a med-high heat, stirring frequently, until the mixture boils and the sugar is dissolved. Add the apricots and simmer for 3 minutes. Fill each hot dry jar with the fruit and two fennel sprigs, leaving ½ inch headspace. Pour hot liquid over the fruit until just covered. Wipe the rims with a clean towel and attach the lids securely. Place the jars in boiling water bath, and when the water returns to boil, process for 25 minutes.

References:

Exotic Herbs, Carole Saville, Henry Holt, 1997; ISBN: 0-8050-4073-0

Sources:

Wood Violet Herb Farm,
www.woodvioletherbfarm.com plants

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