



MARKETPLACE

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TRY THIS

Horseradish

HORSERADISH REALLY KNOWS how to wake up the senses. And we're not just talking about the jarred condiment sold on supermarket shelves. Peeled and freshly grated horseradish root has a hot pungency and underlying sweetness that few condiments can match. Typically harvested in early spring or late fall, when its flavor is strongest, fresh horseradish root has been used for centuries in Europe as a prized flavoring and medicinal herb.

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It's valued for those same reasons today: It adds a spicy bite to sauces, relishes, and savory dishes, and it produces chemical compounds with potential anticancer properties. The jarred iteration is found in most grocery stores, but it's usually tamed with vinegar, salt, sugar, and mustard and offers only a trace of the fresh root's potency. For the full impact, look for fresh horseradish in the produce department and peel, then slice or grate it yourself.

What it is

Horseradish originated in Eastern Europe and is a perennial plant of the mustard family (think turnips, kale, and broccoli raab). Today, it's grown throughout Europe and the United States. While its coarse green leaves are edible, horseradish is cultivated mainly for its sharp-tasting fleshy root. The root produces little aroma while intact, but cut, ground, or grated, it releases a type of mustard oil with a sinus-clearing aroma.

How to buy and store it

Fresh horseradish root should have light-brown skin and white flesh. Look for firm, blemish-free roots; avoid those with spongy spots or a withered texture. Extra-large roots may be more fibrous. Wrapped in damp paper towels and sealed in a plastic bag, horseradish keeps in the refrigerator for up to two weeks.

How to use it

To prepare fresh horseradish, scrub the root clean and peel it with a sharp paring knife. Grate the root in a food processor or by hand and add it to vinaigrettes, mustards, hot and cold sauces, and flavored butters that accompany pork, beef, or fish. Try it in Bloody Marys or combine it with ketchup and lemon juice for an easy cocktail sauce.

To preserve horseradish, submerge the freshly grated root in white vinegar and refrigerate. (It will keep for a few months, but its flavor will mellow with time.)

Heat reduces the root's potency, and cooking it until soft will imbue it with a mild, pleasant flavor. Horseradish pairs well with apples, beets, potatoes, and dairy products like cream and cream cheese.

—Melissa Denchak



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twice-baked potatoes with fresh horseradish

Use a rasp-style grater to grate the horseradish and the cheese.

Serves 4

- 4 medium russet potatoes (about 7 oz. each), scrubbed and dried
- 5 Tbs. unsalted butter, softened
- ½ cup plus 2 Tbs. finely grated Pecorino Romano (¾ oz.)
- ½ cup sour cream, at room temperature
- ¼ cup half-and-half, at room temperature
- 2 Tbs. plus 2 tsp. finely grated fresh horseradish
- 1 Tbs. thinly sliced chives; more for garnish
- Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper

Position a rack in the center of the oven and heat the oven to 400°F.

Prick the potatoes a few times with a fork. Put the potatoes directly on the oven rack and bake until tender when pierced with a skewer, 50 to 60 minutes.

While the potatoes are still hot, hold each one with a clean dishtowel and

cut off about one-quarter lengthwise. With a spoon, scoop the potato flesh out into a medium bowl, leaving enough on the skins that they hold their shape. Add 4 Tbs. of the butter to the potato flesh, and with a potato masher, work the potatoes until lightly mashed but not completely smooth. Stir in ½ cup of the pecorino, the sour cream, half-and-half, 2 Tbs. of the horseradish, the chives, 1 tsp. salt, and a few grinds of pepper and mix until combined. Mound the filling into the potatoes. Cut the remaining 1 Tbs. butter into 4 pieces and top each potato with a pat of butter. Transfer to a small rimmed baking sheet or baking dish. (The potatoes may be prepared to this point up to 6 hours ahead; cover and refrigerate. Add 5 to 10 minutes to the baking time.)

In a small bowl, thoroughly mix the remaining 2 Tbs. pecorino and 2 tsp. horseradish with your fingers. Sprinkle over the potatoes. Bake until the potatoes are heated through and the tops are golden-brown, about 20 minutes. Sprinkle with chives.

—Melissa Pellegrino



Photographs by Scott Phillips; food styling by Sa'faya Tork