

Purple King, Rattlesnake alongside Blue Lake

Some mythical beings out of Harry Potter? No, *Phaseolus Vulgaris* - beans! Beans with purple pods, beans with green pods flecked with purple and beans with plain green pods. These are few of the many heirloom varieties that are (thankfully) readily available from seed saver associations and various other organisations worldwide.

Heirloom vegetables are our inheritance; selected and saved by our ancestors, sometimes over hundreds even thousands of years, they offer some of the best tasting, best yielding and disease resistant varieties. These open pollinated heirloom varieties are reliable, productive and easy to grow, unlike modern hybrids and genetically modified crops bred for transportability and storage, not flavour, goodness and continuity.

Beans both dried and fresh, are brimming with nutrients. An excellent source of protein they are also packed with vitamin C, vitamin K, vitamin A, manganese, folate, iron and many other minerals as well as omega-3 fatty acids and fibre.



I grew these three varieties of beans (that all turn green when cooked), along with dozens of other organic and heirloom vegetables and fruits, last season at Mt. Sugarloaf Farm (more about this on www.krisdhillon.com).

They were easy to grow, incredibly resilient to the harsh conditions, and wonderfully productive over many weeks. They were also very tasty.

I used them for all sorts of delicious dishes. Below is just one of them.

Spicy Fresh Bean Bhaji

This bhaji is delicious with yoghurt, roti or paratha and Indian pickles. It also particularly good as a side dish with a lamb or goat curry.

Both French beans and runner beans work well in this recipe, but they do need to be very fresh and full of flavour. It is the succulence and sweetness of the beans that make this dish so good. If you don't grow your own, try and buy organically grown beans.



Serves 4-6 Preparation and cooking time: 45 minutes

3 tbsp ghee or olive oil
2 small or 1 large onion, finely chopped
2 cloves garlic, finely chopped
1 small knob of ginger, finely chopped
2 green chillies (or to taste), finely chopped
1 tsp turmeric
500g green beans, topped, tailed and sliced into 1 cm pieces
1 tsp salt
½ tsp garam masala

- Sauté the onion in the ghee or oil until starting to brown at the edges. Add the garlic and ginger and fry for a minute until aromatic.
- Stir in the chillies, turmeric and salt and stir fry for a few seconds and add the beans. Stir the beans around in the pan until everything is well mixed.
- Add a little water, stir and cover pan. Cook over low-medium heat for about 15-20 minutes, stirring regularly until the beans are tender. Add a little more water during this time if required to prevent the food sticking to the bottom of the pan.
- Stir in the garam masala, cook for a few seconds more and serve.

When the going gets tough, the tough get growing!