



Fennel, Orange and Zereshk Salad with Fig Vincotto

Crispy fennel makes for a great salad. The licorice taste is a great pairing with the sweetness of the oranges and the tangy sourness of zereshk, which are dried berries much like red currants. This dish is about texture and the interplay of sweet and tangy flavors.

4 servings

Ingredients

2 large fennel bulbs, sliced very thin
Juice of 1 lemon
1 tablespoon olive oil
3 large oranges, supremed
4 tablespoons zereshk, or dried barberries (see Chef's Note)
Salt and pepper
Fig Vincotto (see Chef's Note)
Parsley sprigs, for garnish

[Chef's Note on ingredients: Zereshk is the Persian name for barberries, a tangy, red berry that grows on thorny shrubs (and often the bane of farmers because of their tenacious root structure). They are similar to red currants, which can be substituted, but it's worth finding the zereshk, since they have a distinctive sour flavor. They are sold in dry form in Persian and Middle Eastern stores. Vincotto is a thick syrupy vinegar made from the boiled must of grapes that have been dried on the vine and barrel aged for over four years. Again, it's worth finding the real thing, which is now widely sold in specialty gourmet stores, but a suitable substitute would be a deeply flavored fruited vinegar that you have reduced on the stove until it becomes syrupy.]

Equipment

Mandoline

Preparation

Place the barberries in a bowl and pour in a little of the vincotto to reconstitute.

Supreme the oranges:

Using a sharp knife cut off the top and bottom of the oranges until the flesh is exposed. Next, run the knife down the sides, removing the peel and pith (the white part), exposing all of the flesh. Once the peel has been entirely removed, use the segments as a guide, cutting the segments out of the orange leaving the membrane between them.

Prepare the fennel salad:

Remove the root end and tops of the fennel bulbs. Using a mandoline or a sharp knife, slice the fennel bulbs as thinly as possible. Place the fennel slices in a bowl and toss with the lemon juice and olive oil. Add salt and pepper to taste and toss gently. Marinate at room temperature for ½ an hour to several hours.

Service

When ready to serve, use a slotted spoon to remove the barberries from the vincotto, reserving the vincotto. Mound ¼ of the fennel in a bowl or salad plate, and arrange the orange segments in a circle around the plate. Mound a tablespoon of the barberries in the center of the salad, and drizzle the remaining vincotto over the salad. Garnish with parsley sprigs and serve.

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