

CRACKED WHEAT/ BURGHUL

Cracked wheat or burghul is a wheat that has been boiled and baked before being cracked so it only needs reconstituting in water. In Middle Eastern cookery it is as widely used as rice or potatoes would be in other parts of the world. It can be steeped in water or stock, used in salads, stuffing's, pilaffs or simply with a knob of butter to accompany a meal.

SPINACH CRACKED WHEAT SALAD

Ingredients

250g fine burghul wheat
375ml hot water
150g spinach leaves, stalk removed and washed well
1 cup mint leaves, finely shredded
1 red onion, finely diced
1 clove garlic
½ tsp sumac
½ tsp allspice
1/3 tsp cinnamon
½ tsp salt and pepper
100 – 120 ml olive oil
2 lemons, juice of

Serves 4

Method

Soak the burghul wheat in the water for 10 minutes.

Heat a medium size pot or fry pan and add spinach. You shouldn't need any liquid as the spinach should have enough water clinging to the leaves. Give a brief stir to rotate and wilt the leaves. Remove from the heat, put into a bowl along with one clove of garlic and whizz using a hand wand until a coarse, thick green paste has formed.

Drain the burghul wheat well, tip mine into a clean tea towel and wring it as dry as possible. Tip into a bowl along with the spinach paste, mint leaves and red onion.

In a small mixing bowl add the spices, lemon juice and oil. Season with salt and pepper, taste and adjust if necessary. Pour over the burghul wheat and mix well. Taste and adjust seasoning if necessary.

NB – don't forget to add your favourite spices, vegetables and nuts and move with the seasons.

This wheat goes fantastically with tomatoes, cucumbers, herbs and so on!

FENNEL

Fennel is a perennial herb which is believed to be native to the Mediterranean. In ancient Greece it was called Marathon as this is the area it came from. The ancient Greeks believed that Prometheus used the stalk of a fennel plant to steal fire from the gods

The bulb, foliage, and seeds of the fennel plant are widely used in many of the culinary traditions of the world. Fennel pollen is the most potent form of fennel, but also the most expensive. Dried fennel seed is an aromatic, anise-flavoured spice, brown or green in colour when fresh, slowly turning a dull grey as the seed ages. For cooking, green seeds are optimal. The leaves are delicately flavoured and similar in shape to those of dill. The bulb is a crisp, hardy root vegetable and may be sautéed, stewed, braised, grilled, or eaten raw.

Fennel features prominently in Mediterranean cuisine, where bulbs and fronds are used, both raw and cooked, in side dishes, salads, pastas, vegetable dishes such as artichoke dishes in Greece, and risottos. Fennel seed is a common ingredient in Italian sausages and meatballs and northern European rye breads.

FENNEL MAYONNAISE

serves 8

Ingredients

1 clove of garlic, peeled
1 teaspoon salt
2 large egg yolks
1 teaspoon Dijon mustard
250 ml extra virgin olive oil
250 ml olive oil or good quality oil
Lemon juice to taste
Salt and pepper
Good handful fresh fennel leaves, roughly chopped

Method

With a little salt, smash the garlic to a paste. Whisk the egg yolks and mustard together (you can use a food processor), in a bowl then **slowly** start to add the olive oil bit by bit - using two different types of oils will give it a more mellow flavour as pure extra virgin olive oil is a little too strong and peppery.

Once you've blended in a quarter of the oil, start to add the rest in a more consistent stream. Add the garlic, lemon juice and fennel leaves and season to taste, adding more lemon or salt etc to get the right balance. Really delicious with fish, crayfish or cold roast pork!

EDMOND'S FRESH FISH

Is owner-operated with a shop in Green Island. They have their own fishing boats and all fish is filleted on site. Their fish is unbelievably fresh and seasonal. If the weather is bad and the fishing boats cannot go out then there is no fish, it is that simple!

BAKED FISH IN A BAG

Ingredients

Serves 4

4 large fillets of fish, grouper, gurnard or whatever tickles your fancy
2 lemons
4 spring onions, sliced into 2cm long pieces (use the green end as well)
4 potatoes, cooked and sliced into ½ cm slices
2 bulbs fennel, sliced thinly (reserving the leaves)
Sea salt and cracked black pepper
White wine
Extra virgin olive oil
Tin foil for wrapping

Method

Preheat the oven 200C

Lay four large sheets of tin foil on your work surface. Divide the cooked potatoes between each parcel and place central on one half (it will be folded over). Now place the fish fillets on each, fennel slices, season lightly with salt and pepper. Drizzle over a little oil, and scatter over the spring onions and a few fennel leaves. Garnish with a thin round of lemon.

Fold over the remaining tin foil so it neatly reaches the other side (try not to squash the fish). Tightly fold the edges together starting from one side and working to the other. When almost complete add a splash of wine and seal tightly. Continue until all the parcels are completed (this can be done ahead of time and stored in the fridge).

Place carefully onto a preheated oven tray. Bake for 8-12 minutes or until the parcel puffs up like a pillow. Carefully remove from the oven and serve straight away. Pop at the table and enjoy.

Any sort of fish can be cooked like this and it marries to many flavours. Try a dash of soy sauce, spring onions, chilli and ginger. The options are endless.

ROASTED POTATOES, FENNEL AND LEMON

Ingredients

Serves 4

1 kg potatoes – Brydone agria work exceptionally well for this.
2 bulbs fennel and the leaves
4 cloves garlic
1 lemon
Olive oil
Salt and pepper

Method

Preheat the oven to 200C. Place a roasting tray in the oven and heat up to very hot. Slice the potatoes into ½ cm round disc, place them into a bowl. Bruise the garlic cloves by gently smashing them with a knife put them in with the potatoes.

Trim all the leaves off the fennel. Tidy up the root end but don't cut it too far as you want to keep the fennel whole. Slice the fennel into similar size pieces as the potatoes and add to the bowl. Drizzle over enough oil to coat all the ingredients well, squeeze over the juice of the lemon, season well with salt and freshly ground pepper. Mix well and pour directly onto the hot oven tray.

Spread them out so they are not too thick on the tray as you won't them to cook evenly and crispy. Roast for 10 minutes give them a quick move around on the tray and cook for a further 10 minutes. Roughly chop up some fennel leaves and sprinkle these through the potatoes before serving. Great served with fish or pork!

THANK YOU TO THE FOLLOWING VENDORS FOR THEIR FANTASTIC PRODUCTS.

EDMONDS FRESH FISH – FISH

ETTRICK GARDENS – PEARS

SAM YOUNG LTD – SPINACH

BRYDONE GROWERS LTD – FENNEL AND SALAD POTATOES