



Winter Harvest

NIBBLEDISH CONTRIBUTOR

Ingredients

Assorted Winter Vegetables **Jasmine Tea Salt:** Dried Jasmine Tea, Good quality sea salt **Spiced Mayonnaise:** Prepared mayonnaise, Ground Turmeric, Ground Cumin, Smoked Paprika, Cayenne Pepper **Black Butter:** Butter, Capers, Fortnam & Mason's "Anchovy Alchemy" (or substitute anchovy fillets), Black Sesame Seeds, Black Pepper, Cheong Chang Black Caramel Sauce (substitute kecap manis), Lemon Juice

Instructions

For starters, let me just say that I'm really happy with the way this turned out, as it demonstrates to me the quintessence of cooking and eating. On the cooking side, this means good, seasonal ingredients where the role of the chef is to bring out their natural characteristics and push them further through combinations of flavours, and on the eating side, it means food where people can come together and eat without pretension, but without sacrificing quality or experience. Basically, this is an interesting steamed vegetable dish to serve at a winter dinner party in place of ordinary vegetables or a salad. The concept and service of the dish was intended to be both simple and spectacular at the same time. To start, prepare the condiments. **For the Jasmine Tea Salt**, grind a small amount of dry jasmine tea leaves and flowers in a mortar and pestle. Then add in a very good quality mineral salt and combine with the pestle. Done. **For the Spiced Mayonnaise**, take about 2 tablespoons of good quality prepared mayonnaise and mix through half a teaspoon of turmeric, and about a quarter teaspoon each of cayenne pepper, ground cumin and smoked paprika. Set aside for at least half an hour for the colour and flavour to develop. **For the Black Butter**, first toast some black sesame seeds in a dry pan until fragrant. Add 2/3 of the sesame seeds to a small food processor (reserving the rest for serving) and add in softened butter, Fortnam & Mason's Anchovy Alchemy (this is a delicious condiment, or substitute anchovy fillets to taste), capers, Caramel Sauce, a little garlic, a squeeze of lemon and lots of freshly ground black pepper. Process until combined. Then it's time for the vegetables. Any

winter vegetables will do, but I have used here (grouped in order of cooking time): New Potatoes, Sweet Potato, Jerusalem Artichoke, (around 12 minutes) Baby Corn, Parsnip, Baby Carrot, Baby Cabbage (I don't think I know what this is, it was like a Brussel Sprout but looked exactly like a tiny cabbage), Cauliflower (both white and purple), Broccoli, Romanesco (the extraordinary fractal shaped vegetable similar to broccoli that you can see hiding behind the carrot)(all around 5 minutes), Goubo (burdock root), Radish, Red Chicory, and Snow Peas (1-2 minutes). Plus Ginko Nuts for presentation. OK, I probably went overboard with the selection here, but this is supposed to be a celebration of winter vegetables. Scrub them well but leave the skins on everything. As a harvest dish the skins give the dish the earthy quality it needs. I'm very fond of the Jerusalem Artichoke and Goubo for that particular characteristic in this dish. If using the fresh Ginko Nuts like I did, you need to prepare this by cracking them out of their shells (the handle of the knife brought down on the seam of the nut will do this well, without squashing the nut). Put the nuts in a bowl, pour over boiling water and sit for 10 minutes to loosen the inner skin. Peel the nuts and then simmer in more water for 20-30 minutes to cook. These are the only thing that was cooked separately. The rest were done in the steamer. And that's the fun part. Cut all the vegetables to the size you like and lay them out on a cutting board in order of cooking time. Set a countdown timer and add the vegetables in reverse cooking time order, so that they are all ready at the same time. The vegetables should still be quite firm and "al dente". While the vegetables are cooking, plate up the condiments as shown in the picture. As soon as the vegetables are done, arrange them in the steamer how you would like them to be presented and get them straight to the table. Steamed vegetables go cold very quickly so I suggest improvising some kind of steam warmer for the table. I did this with the antique wooden dish I bought at a market with a deep plate inside it filled with the steaming water, with the steamer placed on top of the whole thing. The dish itself looks quite spectacular when it's brought to the table, but it's not fussy or contrived at all. When everyone just dives in with their hands and attacks the condiments on shared dishes, it's as casual an experience as you could ask for. While of course any of the condiments can go with any of the vegetables, I was blown away by the combination of the parsnip with the Jasmine Tea Salt and the potatoes with the Black Butter. The sweetness of the parsnip matched perfectly with the aroma of the jasmine, and the texture of the sesame and saltiness of the anchovy was amazing with the warm potato. Good food. Good company. Perfect.
