



“Simplicity—as in this lunch menu—is incredibly valuable. It doesn’t mean that you haven’t thought something through. In fact, it’s the reverse—you’ve thought it through so well that you can just do it simply.”

SUBCHAPTERS

Timing Your Cooking

Roast for Intense Flavors

Steam for Delicate Flavors

A Raw Salad: Marrying Texture
and Flavor

An Everyday Sauce: Yogurt Raita

Plate and Serve Lunch

CHAPTER REVIEW

While planning a menu, think about the timing of each component—what can be done ahead of time, what can be done while other ingredients cook, and what needs to be finished at the last minute. In this India-inspired lunch, Alice makes the carrot salad and raita while the Delicata squash roasts, and she utilizes brown rice she cooked earlier in the week. Warming the brown rice and steaming the turnips will be the final steps.

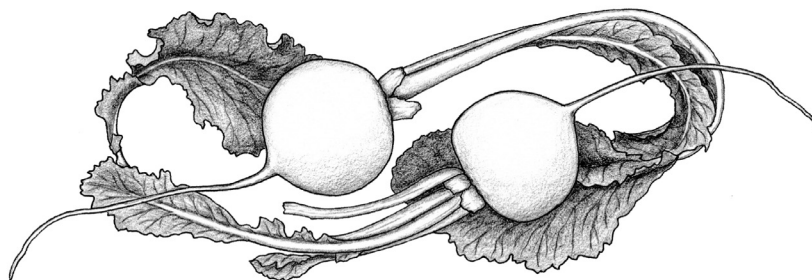
Every time you follow a recipe, you learn a technique that can be applied to other things. With these recipes, you’ll practice roasting and steaming.

While the squash roasts, Alice preps the turnips with their greens; when they are young and small in size, steaming is a gentle way to cook them and preserve their natural sweetness. The turnips will continue to steam even after you pull them from the steamer, so keep that in mind to retain a little bit of crunch.

The carrots for the salad are peeled to remove the fine roots. All it takes is practice to cut the carrots into thin sticks with your knife. Season the salad with cumin salt and dress with olive oil and vinegar, tasting as you go. This salad is sturdy enough to be made ahead of time so that the vinaigrette can soak into the carrots.

With the squash in the oven, the turnips ready to steam, the salad made, next make the yogurt raita. Alice uses whole-milk plain yogurt from Straus—the first all-organic dairy in California.

Warm the brown rice, and check on the doneness of the squash. Season the rice and add the chopped cilantro at the end of cooking. When everything else is ready, steam the turnips. Think about if you’d like to plate the lunch on platters for guests to serve themselves or if you’d like to compose a specific plate. The softness of the yogurt, the crunch of the carrots, and the distinctive flavor of the turnips all play a part in contributing different textures and flavors to this lunch.



RECIPES

ROAST DELICATA SQUASH

ADAPTED FROM *Chez Panisse Vegetables*, PAGE 275

Roasting intensifies the flavors of an ingredient and can transform a vegetable that you may not care for in its raw state. Carrots, potatoes, and squash are great when simply roasted with olive oil and salt.

For the Delicata squash, cut off the ends and peel the skin—but don't bother getting into the crevices; the skin is quite edible. Cut in half lengthwise and scrape out the seeds. Peels and seeds go into your compost bin. Slice into half moons of even thickness, about 1 inch, for even cooking. Toss with olive oil, salt and pepper, and torn Kaffir lime leaves. (If you don't have Kaffir lime leaves, use sage leaves or just olive oil and salt.) Spread evenly on a baking sheet and roast at 375°F for 40 minutes, until tender and lightly browned, stirring occasionally.

VARIATION

♦ Other vegetables to roast: all winter squash, summer squash, potatoes, carrots, cabbage, cauliflower, fennel, Brussels sprouts, asparagus, onions, and parsnips.



STEAMED TOKYO TURNIPS

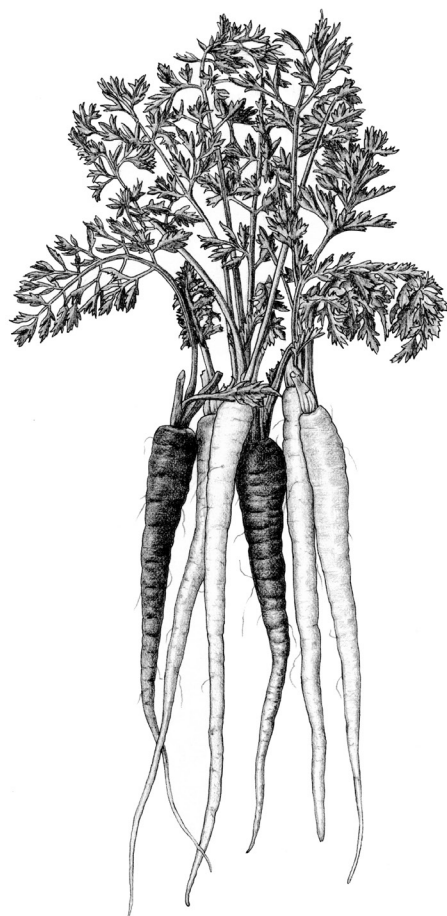
FROM *In the Green Kitchen*, PAGE 78

Tokyo turnips are a beautiful all-white variety that are sweet tasting and mildly spicy. When harvested young, about 1 inch in diameter, the smooth skins are thin and delicate and don't need to be peeled. At that stage, if the greens and turnips are in pristine condition, they are very good steamed whole with the greens attached. Otherwise, separate the turnips and greens, leaving an inch or so of the pale green stalks at the top of the turnips. Rinse the turnips well to remove any grit in the stalks, and leave them whole or cut into halves or quarters. Wash the greens and discard any yellow or damaged leaves. Place a steamer basket in a saucepan with a tight-fitting lid, pour in water to the depth of half an inch or so, and heat the water to boiling. Add the turnips and greens to the basket, cover the pan, and cook until just tender, 5 to 8 minutes, depending on their size. They are delicious eaten with nothing more than a little salt and butter or a drizzle of olive oil, or with a dash of vinegar or soy sauce, or squeeze of lemon juice.

VARIATION

♦ Other vegetables to steam: spinach, asparagus, mustard greens, corn, broccolini, and baby bok choy.





JULIENNE CARROT SALAD WITH CUMIN SALT

ADAPTED FROM *Chez Panisse Vegetables*, PAGE 78

4 SERVINGS

- 1 pound carrots
- 1 clove garlic, peeled
- Large pinch of cumin salt
- 2 tablespoons red wine vinegar
- 6 tablespoons olive oil
- 2 tablespoons chopped parsley

Peel the carrots and julienne—quick work with a Japanese mandoline. Mash the garlic clove with the cumin salt (see Chapter 5, *A Well-Stocked Pantry*) to a smooth paste, and mix it with the red wine vinegar. Whisk in olive oil. Taste for seasoning and add more vinegar or salt, if needed. Toss with the carrots and add the chopped parsley.

VARIATION

- ♦ Add cayenne and chopped cilantro to taste.

YOGURT RAITA

ADAPTED FROM *The Art of Simple Food*, PAGE 232

MAKES ABOUT ½ CUP

This is a version of raita, the cooling South Asian yogurt sauce, which is often made with cucumber and seasoned with cumin seed, cinnamon, and cayenne.

- ¾ cup organic whole-milk yogurt
- 1 small garlic clove, pounded to a purée
- Pinch of salt
- Dried chile flakes

In a small bowl, whisk together all the ingredients. Taste for salt, and adjust to taste.

VARIATIONS

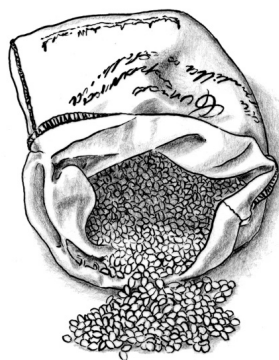
- ♦ Add grated cucumber. Try different varieties of cucumber such as lemon, Armenian, or Japanese.
- ♦ Instead of dried chile flakes, add in pounded dried spices such as nigella, cumin, or coriander.
- ♦ Grate in ginger and carrot.

TO COOK BROWN RICE

Alice likes to cook a large amount of rice to have on hand in her refrigerator, ready to warm and season for quick meals during the week.

METHOD ONE

To make a batch of long-grain brown rice, add 1½ cups rice (amply rinsed in cold water beforehand) to 2 cups water in a heavy saucepan. Cover and bring to a boil over medium-high heat. Immediately turn the heat down to low and cook until all the water is absorbed, about 30 minutes. Turn off the heat and let rest, still covered for another 10 minutes. Fluff and serve.



METHOD TWO

Fill a large pot with plenty of water, as you would for cooking dried pasta. Boil the water on high heat and season with a big pinch of salt. Add the rice and boil vigorously for 15 to 25 minutes, depending on the type of rice. Test a few grains for tenderness—once it seems cooked throughout, drain in a colander or large sieve. Immediately spread the rice in a thin layer on a large tray. Let the rice steam off and cool completely. When cool, transfer to a bowl, cover and refrigerate for up to one week.

NOTE

Both methods work for other hearty rice varieties such as forbidden rice and red rice. Method two works well for basmati and long-grain brown rice. For fluffed white rice, halve the amount of water in method one.

BROWN RICE WITH CILANTRO

Heat olive oil in a cast-iron pan and sauté cooked brown rice. Season with salt and add in chopped coriander just before serving. Taste for salt, and adjust if needed.

VARIATIONS

- ♦ Mix with sautéed greens and serve with an egg for breakfast or lunch.
- ♦ Add sautéed onion, minced garlic, toasted sliced almonds, and a handful of currants to warmed brown rice to make a version of jeweled rice.
- ♦ Spread a spoonful of brown rice over a sheet of lightly toasted nori, add a few slices of avocado and cucumber and a shake of sesame seeds, and roll into a cone for dipping in a soy-rice vinegar sauce.

A VEGETABLE LUNCH / ROASTED, STEAMED, AND RAW

LEARN MORE

- ♦ Try a baked version of brown rice from page 101 of *The Art of Simple Food*.
- ♦ Read more about winter squash on page 324 of *The Art of Simple Food*.

