

Garden diary : fennel

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Chuchichäschtli (Kitchen cupboard)

Magenbrot or "Alpine Herb Bread"

The German word Magenbrot, which translates as "stomach bread", might not sound very appealing. The unique combination of herbs and seasoning mixed with the sweetness of this chocolate covered bread is supposed to have a healthy and tummy soothing effect. In the Middle Ages, only pharmacists were allowed to sell spices and food like Magenbrot. In those days, the herb bread was not covered in chocolate yet and probably healthier than it is now.

Magenbrot was originally called Morsellen, Morsäl or Mursäl. No Swiss village fair or festival is complete without a stand selling this sweet and spicy speciality, which captures all of the flavours of winter. And to this day, it is still tradition to sell it in cute little pink paper bags.

Recipe

- ♥ 250g honey
- ♥ 250g sugar

Warm together in a pan. Keep stirring until sugar melts at 60°C - use a meat thermometer. Set aside to cool slightly.

- ♥ 500g flour
- ♥ 25g breadcrumbs (dried)

- ♥ 1 tsp cinnamon powder
- ♥ 1/4 tsp clove powder
- ♥ 100g mixed peel
- ♥ 50g hazelnuts - roughly chopped
- ♥ 1 1/2 tsp baking powder
- ♥ 125ml milk

Mix all these ingredients together in a bowl. Add the honey/sugar mixture and mix to form a dough. Knead lightly and then leave at room temperature overnight.

Cut the dough into eight equal pieces. Roll each piece into a 2cm thick roll. Lay them at 4cm intervals on a tray lined with baking paper.

Bake at 180°C for 15 minutes. Let cool. Then cut each roll into 2cm diagonal slices.

Glaze

- ♥ 300g sugar
 - ♥ 100ml water
- Boil these, stirring for 2-3 minutes.
- ♥ Add 35g dark chocolate, broken into pieces and stir until melted.

In a bowl, combine one quarter of the magenbrot pieces and one quarter of the glaze and stir well.

Spread out in a single layer on baking paper to dry and repeat with the remaining three quarters.

By Edith Hess



Magenbrot

©www.about.ch/culture/food/magenbrot.html

Garden Diary: Fennel

Florence Fennel or bulb fennel as opposed to wild fennel is an aniseed flavoured vegetable which grows above ground and is used either raw in salads, cooked on its own, steamed as stir fry or baked in the oven. The feathery dill-like leaves can also be used to add flavour to cooking. The plants attract beneficial insects to the garden and are loved by nectar feeders.

Sow the seeds directly from November, thinning seedlings to allow space for the bulbs to grow. Good drainage is important. Fennel grows best in an open sunny position, with added compost dug in prior to planting to improve crop quality. Stony soils inhibit root expansion. When the fattened bulbs reach tennis ball size, start mounding up with dirt or mulch over three to four weeks to blanch the bases.

Keep well watered and remove any seed heads that develop, so all the energy goes into the stem and bulb production.

Start picking leaves when small for salads or harvest the bulb when firm. They are ready to harvest at 90-100 days. To prolong harvest, just cut at the bases and they will re-sprout, producing smaller off-shoots. In warmer areas, fennel can easily self seed and produce many plants which the slugs love to eat! Caterpillars and snails can also be a problem by chewing the stems. So either pick off the offenders or lay bait.

By Melissa Lanz



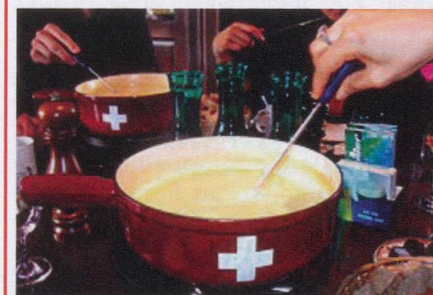
Neuchâtel cheese fondue

Make your own delicious cheese fondue with a twist à la Neuchâtel:

- ♥ 500g Gruyère cheese, grated
- ♥ 250g Emmental cheese, grated
- ♥ 350ml white wine, dry
- ♥ 5 cloves of garlic
- ♥ a little nutmeg and pepper
- ♥ 10-100ml Kirsch
- ♥ 2 tsp cornflour
- ♥ 2 tbs finely chopped chives
- ♥ 1kg white bread

Cut the bread into cubes and place in a bowl. Put white wine, garlic and grated cheese into a fondue pan (caquelon). Heat the mix until the cheese melts, stirring continuously until well heated through. Dissolve the corn flour in the Kirsch and add to fondue. Add pepper, nutmeg and chives and serve immediately. Enjoy!

Contributed by Melissa Lanz



www.en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Swiss_fondue_2.jpg