

GREEN BEANS AND SPICY CHEESE

What? A cheese that doesn't melt? What fun is that? Well plenty of course...that's why it's here. Not only that, but you can make it at home in a process no more complicated than brewing a cup of tea. I began to think about this when I considered that so many vegetables are traditionally prepared steamed, or blanched, and buttered. My theory is vegetables are good dressed with an oil or fat because their flavors are oil soluble, and the oil becomes a vehicle for tasting the innate flavor more thoroughly. I also suspect that while vegetables are good nutrition, they are a low energy food, and the body "likes" the extra boost of energy concentrated in fats.

Hey now, this is about green beans. I decided if butter is good, why not other dairy? Indian paneer, or Mexican queso fresca sautéed in spices is great tossed with steamed green beans; prepared this way, they can even be served as a light entrée. You could make your own cheese using the complicated recipe of: Milk + vinegar + technique...it's kind of fun.

1# fresh Green Beans snapped and stringed
1/2# fresh Paneer or other non-melting cheese
1/2t broken Rosemary
1/2t Cumin seeds
Olive Oil (the good stuff)
Salt

Steam or parboil the green beans until just tender, refresh in cold water, then drain. Slice the cheese 1/4" to 3/8" thick, and press rosemary onto the surface of one side, and cumin seeds on the other. Sauté the cheese in oil browning both sides well. Cut the beans and cheese into 1" lengths or other sizes-shapes as desired. Toss together with the oil from the pan over high heat until warm. Alternately, serve cold with additional oil, and vinegar or citrus juice (oj really interesting here).

NOTES:

To make fresh cheese, bring 2 qts of milk to a boil, stir in 2T of vinegar. It should separate into curds and whey...if the milk does not begin to look like egg drop soup, you may need to add another 1T vinegar. Once the milk separates, strain it into a colander lined with cheesecloth, let it drain a few minutes then pull up the cloth to enclose the cheese; form it into a ball squeezing out what liquid you can. Place the cheese ball under a weight for 5 – 10 minutes, then chill if not using right away. I usually use a sauce pan full of water for my weight, and press the cheese right in the sink.

Veganize it: Replace cheese with slices of firm tofu.

You could use different herbs and spices such as fennel seed, mustard seed, or caraway; basil, sage, or dill...follow your tongue!