

Fennel: A food lover's dream ingredient

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(HealthDay)—You might have seen fennel in the produce section of your market without knowing what exactly it was. Fennel is a fragrant bulb that can be a food lover's dream ingredient, because it has a refreshing taste, similar to anise or licorice, and pairs well with other ingredients to create gourmet dishes.

Many cooks miss out because they aren't sure how to prepare it, especially when it's sold with its long feathery leaves intact. But fennel is surprisingly easy to prepare and can be enjoyed raw as well as lightly sauteed, or even slow-cooked as a soup or stew flavoring.

Fennel bulbs come in male and female types. The female bulbs are rounder and also sweeter. Both work equally well in this salad with [tomatoes](#) and cumin seeds. It calls for trimming off the stalks. Save them for another dish—they can be used much the way you would celery stalks. Always choose bulbs that feel heavy in your hand and are free of cracks and brown spots.

Shaved Fennel Salad With Tomatoes and

Cumin

- 1 pound plum tomatoes
- 1/2 cup extra virgin [olive oil](#), divided
- Seasoning salt of your choice
- 2 fennel bulbs, trimmed
- 1 tablespoon balsamic vinegar
- 1/2 teaspoon lemon pepper
- 1 tablespoon cumin seeds

Quarter the tomatoes and squeeze out the seeds using your hands or scoop them out with a grapefruit spoon. Place on a parchment-lined baking sheet, drizzle with half the olive oil and sprinkle with seasoning salt. Bake for about 25 minutes at 400 degrees until the tomatoes soften and shrink in size.

While the tomatoes are roasting, "shave" or thinly slice the raw fennel and [place](#) in a bowl. Add the remaining oil, balsamic vinegar and lemon pepper, and toss well.

Toast the cumin seeds in a dry skillet over medium heat. Cook for 1 minute until fragrant, tossing well. Top the fennel with the cumin seeds and roasted tomatoes. Serve immediately. Store any leftovers in the fridge for a cold side dish.

Yield: 4 servings

More information: Find out more about [fennel](#) from the website of the World's Healthiest Foods.

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