

Eat Broad Beans!

We love broad beans simply boiled, buttered and served with the Sunday roast. But they're much more versatile than that and seem to have a particular affinity for dishes using pork-based meats such as bacon, pancetta and chorizo.

HISTORY - Broad beans are thought to have originated in the Mediterranean. Archaeological findings at Iron Age and Bronze Age settlements in various parts of Europe show that they have been an important staple food for millennia.

Today broad beans grow in temperate regions across the globe. They are known as fava beans in America where they haven't reached the same level of popularity as in Europe. They are enjoyed across northern China and are crucial to Egyptian cuisine as a key ingredient in the national dish, *Ful medames*, and in falafels.

BIOLOGY - Broad beans are a type of vetch with the Latin name *Vicia faba*. Vetches, which include peas and alfalfa, are nitrogen fixing plants that enrich the soil in which they are planted.

Commonly cultivated broad beans mainly fall into two classes. *Long pod* beans feature eight beans per pod and are more durable to different climatic conditions. *Windsor* varieties have four or five beans per pod and are considered by some to have a finer flavour.

BUYING - For the freshest broad beans try a farmers' market or, better still, a pick your own farm. Choose crisp-looking unwithered pods.

STORING - After picking, broad beans quickly lose flavour with each day that passes. Keep them cool and eat them quick. Freshly picked beans can be frozen very successfully after briefly blanching them.

PREPARING - Split the pods and remove the beans (only the pods of VERY young beans are edible). The pale green skins can be left on or removed according to preference (older, larger beans have thicker, tougher skins). To remove the skins, blanch in boiling water for one minute and then rinse in cold water. Slip off the skins before finishing by boiling or steaming until tender (approx. 2 - 5 minutes).

COOKING - Scan the code below to view the recipe for '*Broad bean & ricotta tagliatelle*' on the seasonal recipes blog.



or visit: qmul.sustainability.wordpress.com/recipes