

The Curve

EAT RUNNER BEANS!

Fresh, young runner beans are a gem amongst the many wonderful vegetables available during the British summer. At their best they are at once tender, succulent and bursting with flavour. There can be few better ways of serving runner beans than piled onto a plate alongside meltingly soft roast lamb, roast potatoes and gravy, with a good glass of claret or perhaps a Coonawarra cabernet sauvignon to wash it all down. Or so we thought until we discovered *Runner Bean and Chilli Salsa* - a dish with the uncanny ability to be a perfect match with any barbecue.

HISTORY - Native to the cooler, high-altitude regions of Central America, runner beans have been known as a food crop for well over 2,000 years. They were brought to the British Isles in the seventeenth century by John Tradescant (gardener to King Charles I) and were grown as a decorative plant before being used as a food in Britain.

Today they are a very popular food in the UK, Italy and Mexico, and are grown and eaten in each of the five continents.

BIOLOGY - *Phaseolus coccineus* has long been a favourite with gardeners due to its beautiful flowers and fast-growing nature. Most of the beans grown in the UK are of the *scarlet runner* variety.

NUTRITION - Runner beans are a good source of vitamin C, folic acid and fibre.

TIPS:

BUYING - Look for pert well-coloured pods that snap easily with a crunch to reveal a fresh and juicy inside. The smaller and younger the better; oversized or withered beans aren't worth bothering with.

STORING - Runner beans will keep in the fridge for 2-3 days but, as with all legumes, the beans' sugars start turning to starch after picking and they are best eaten as soon as possible.

COOKING - Scan the QR code below with your smartphone to view and download the recipe for '*Runner beans with feta, walnuts and mint*'

