

# Braised Fennel

serves 4-6

Fennel is eaten raw, roasted, baked, braised and fried in Italy. It has a lovely licorice-like flavor. There are two parts: the bulb and the fronds. I usually trim the fronds and use them in stock or snip them with scissors into salads. When I was a child, my dad and I would cut up raw finocchio (fennel), salt the slivers of bulb, and eat them with gusto; it was one of our special bonding experiences. We would then suck on the fibrous stems with the fronds, sucking every last bit of treasured licorice flavor. I've loved fennel ever since.

**1 fennel bulb, fronds and stems  
trimmed off**  
**2 T. olive oil**

**1/2 cup vegetable stock (or water  
if necessary)**  
**1/4 tsp. salt**  
**1/4 cup shaved/grated parmesan**

Slice the fennel bulb, from the top to the stem, leaving the stem attached, into 1/4" slices. Heat the olive oil in a large frying pan on medium high heat. Add the fennel slices, leaving space in between each one. Fry on the first side until golden brown, 4-5 minutes. Then flip the slices and fry the second side for 3-4 minutes. Add the salt and vegetable stock, place a lid on the pot, and braise for 5 minutes. Remove the lid, and either add the parmesan, fry for a minute, and serve OR spread out, single layer, on a frying pan, sprinkle with the parmesan, and roast at 400° for 5 minutes.

I serve this as a dish with pasta and salad and a green vegetable or I serve it as part of a raw/roasted/blanched vegetable platter extravaganza. The licorice flavor diminishes when the fennel is cooked, leaving a rich, subtle flavor and a lovely texture.