



Braised Fennel Antipasto is excerpted from [THE NIMBLE COOK: NEW STRATEGIES FOR GREAT MEALS THAT MAKE THE MOST OF YOUR INGREDIENTS](#) © 2019 by Ronna Welsh. Illustrations © 2019 by Diana Vassar. Reproduced by permission of RuxMartin Books/Houghton Mifflin Harcourt. All rights reserved.

Braised Fennel Antipasto

This is a simple, elegant dish. Delicious on its own, the braised fennel is outstanding with good salty cheese and excellent olive oil (the olive oil is really key) as a light lunch or opener for a multicourse meal.

For each serving

¾ cup Braised Fennel (*recipe follows*), at room temperature

Excellent olive oil

Leaves from 2 fresh oregano sprigs

Flaky sea salt and freshly ground black pepper

8 to 10 shavings of excellent Parmesan cheese

Slice large wedges of fennel in half lengthwise through the core. Place on a plate, drizzle with oil and then sprinkle with oregano, salt, and pepper. Shave the Parmesan over the top. Serve at room temperature.

Braised Fennel

Braised fennel is mellow, with the faintest hint of anise. It is stunning hot, warm, or cold. The fennel broth is delicious in place of stock in risotto or used to moisten bread for a Braised stuffing. Braised fennel is best made 1 day in advance. Once I've finished it, I freeze any remaining broth in containers to use as a fragrant vegetable stock, or in ice cube trays to serve in Bloody Marys.

makes 6 cups fennel and 2½ cups broth, enough for 4 to 6 servings

3 medium fennel bulbs (about 3 pounds), stalks and fronds removed, bottom lightly trimmed, cut through the core into ½-inch-thick wedges

3 cups water

½ cup dry white wine

5 fresh thyme sprigs

1 bay leaf

1 teaspoon fennel seeds, crushed



3 garlic cloves, thinly sliced
1 tablespoon coarse kosher salt, plus more if needed
1 tablespoon excellent olive oil
Juice from 1 lemon, or to taste

Preheat the oven to 350°F. Place the fennel snugly in a 9-x-13-inch roasting pan or Dutch oven. Combine the water, wine, thyme, bay leaf, fennel seeds, garlic, salt, and oil in a saucepan over high heat; bring to a quick boil. Pour the braising liquid over the fennel. Cover tightly with foil or a lid. Place in the oven and braise until the fennel is translucent and quite tender at its core, but not falling apart, 30 to 40 minutes. Cool in the braising liquid, tasting and seasoning with lemon juice and salt as necessary, as it cools. Serve warm or cold. The fennel can be stored in the refrigerator in the broth for up to 5 days.