



## Edible Paradise: Fresh Picks at the Market

By Andrew Cohen, MBCFM Chef In Residence

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■ **Featured Produce:** *Green Garlic and Turnips*

■ **Recipes:** *Green Garlic Jam, Green Garlic Soup, Japanese Style Pickles, Caramelized Turnips*

This is a time of year that straddles two seasons. Spring is starting to show, but it is still winter. Nights are still cold and sturdy warming food is still welcome at our table. A couple of my favorites for this time of year are now showing up at the market—green garlic and little turnips.

Green garlic has a short season—too short in my opinion, and is the young plant before the base begins to bulb and forms the separate cloves inside. Looking like leeks, green garlic is usually a little more slender and frequently has streaks or blushing of pale red at the base. If you smell the bunch, there is no mistaking the garlic aroma, even though it will be light. The flavor of green garlic is very mild, yet full of the aromatic qualities we love in bulb garlic. It goes wherever cloves might, but is also excellent standing on its own or as the star of a dish. They can be found anywhere from pencil thin up to around an inch in diameter.

Look for firm, bright looking specimens, with greens that are not decaying or wilted. If I am not going to use the garlic right away, I cut away most of the greens, un-bunch the stalks, pat them dry, then roll them in paper toweling and then into an airtight bag. A good seal is a good idea as the garlic can easily perfume the contents of your refrigerator.

It can be used in a vegetable stock that can stand alone or be a base for something heartier, such as a French Onion soup (only nix the onions and use more green garlic) or an oriental style soup flavored with ginger and Five Spice and cilantro and a drizzle of soy sauce. I also love to make a “jam” with it that is great to have on hand. It can be used to top toasts for an appetizer or as a garnish to make a quick and elegant dish of a piece of fish or poultry. Smear it on pizza or add some to a cream sauce. It keeps well in the refrigerator for several days.

### GREEN GARLIC JAM

*1 bunch of green garlic*

*1 medium brown onion*

*Thyme leaves from two sprigs*

*1 tablespoon olive oil or olive oil/ butter combined*

*Salt and pepper*

*1/2 cup water, white wine, white vermouth, or a combination*

*1 teaspoon sugar*

*1 tablespoon white wine vinegar (you may or may not need this)*

- (1) Remove most of the greens from the garlic. Split down the length and thoroughly rinse in cold water to remove possible grit in the layers. Finely slice into half-moons.
- (2) Split the onion through the stem and peel. Cut each half again through the stem and finely slice into quarter moons.
- (3) Heat the oil/butter over medium-high heat in a smallish, heavy pan. It's okay if things are a little crowded when the alliums go in as they will shrink quite a bit.
- (4) When the oil is hot, add the thyme leaves, and as soon as you can smell them, add the garlic and the onion. Stir around to coat with the oil, turn up the heat and sauté until everything is picking up a nice color and you get some fond (the browning and bits on the bottom of the pan) in the pan—be careful not to scorch.
- (5) Add the liquid, and reduce the heat to low. Sprinkle the sugar over all and stir. Cook at a low heat until the contents of the pan take on a thick, syrupy look—jammy.
- (6) Taste for balance. Sometimes a little vinegar will help spark the flavors, bringing out nuance. If you are curious, pull out a little of the jam and add a touch of vinegar to try. Keep it light and remember that as you cook the vinegar it will lose some of the sharpness
- (7) Allow to cool and put into a jar that has a tight seal. If the jam seems a little dry when in the jar, add a splash of oil to the top. Jam keeps a week or so in fridge.

Some variations in method: you can just use a lot of olive oil and stew the alliums. This won't be as sweet, but the oil can be skimmed

*[Continued page 2]*

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and used for cooking and vinaigrettes. If you are confident or have done this a few times, you can use extra water (for a little leeway) and put a top on the pan and simmer over very low heat while you do something else. This is a dish that can't be made in a quantity smaller than this easily without burning.

### GREEN GARLIC SOUP

*1 lb. of green garlic, trimmed of green and finely sliced (2 bunches)*

*1 large brown onion, thinly sliced*

*2 stalks celery thinly sliced*

*1/2 lb. potatoes such as Yukon Gold or Yellow Finn (~2 med.), quartered and sliced into quarter inch pieces*

*1 tablespoon minced fresh thyme*

*Salt and pepper (freshly ground pepper is always best)*

*2 qt. stock (chicken, vegetable-homemade) or water*

*Splash of sherry (optional)*

- (1) In a soup pot, heat 2 tablespoons of olive oil or butter (or a combination) over medium heat. When hot, add the alliums and cook until soft and getting a little color.
- (2) Add the thyme, salt and pepper. Stir in and wait until the aroma comes up. If using the sherry, add in up to a 1/2 cup (the sherry will provide sweetness and a deeper rich color to the finished soup. Cook to reduce wine by 80%.
- (3) Add the potatoes and sauté to color a little and soften. Add the stock or water and bring to a boil. Reduce the heat to a simmer and cook until all the ingredients are soft.
- (4) Puree the soup either with an immersion blender or in the blender (CAUTION: If you use the blender, do not fill with hot soup—it will expand and spray all over the place. Only fill half way and cover the top of the blender with a towel and start at a low speed. Puree until all the soup is smooth. Taste for balance—salt and pepper, or again, vinegar. Use white wine vinegar if you think it could benefit from a dab of sharpness.

This is a lovely soup for cold nights. If you want to lighten it, use a light vegetable stock. To enrich it, use a dark chicken stock. To take it over the top, use a little cream (you will need a little extra salt to bring up the flavors over the fats). I have made this soup without the potatoes and blending, and added ginger and noodles and sautéed shiitake mushrooms for an oriental style soup. Feel free to add carrots, tofu, greens or shredded Napa cabbage, or whatever strikes your fancy.

### TURNIPS

Oft maligned, turnips are one of those vegetables that is just misunderstood. I think this is due to the fact they are often overcooked yielding mushy, gassy, smelly results that are unpleasant at best. Paying attention can bring out the sweetness or the sharpness of turnips for full flavor.

Right now at market my favorite turnips are showing—the small white ones known as Tokyo turnips. Caramelize them to accompany

rich winter fare or make a quick Japanese style pickle with them.

### JAPANESE STYLE PICKLES

*1 bunch Tokyo turnips*

*Optional-1 large carrot*

*1 tablespoon kosher salt*

*1 cup rice vinegar*

*1 cup water*

*1/2 cup sugar*

- (1) Peel and use a mandolin to slice the turnips as thinly as you can and keep them whole. If using the carrot, peel and slice the carrot as thinly as the turnips. Use the same shape or shred into thin shreds.
- (2) Sprinkle the vegetables with the salt, toss to coat evenly and “massage” the vegetables a little.
- (3) While the vegetables wilt, combine the water, vinegar, and sugar in a jar and shake until the sugar goes into suspension (disappears from sight)
- (4) When the vegetables have begun to wilt and have lost their “rawness,” rinse in plenty of cold water. Taste a slice to be sure the salt is gone. Add the vegetables to the dressing and allow to marinate at least an hour. Chill the pickles, then use when cold.

### CARAMELIZED TURNIPS

*1 bunch Tokyo turnips*

*1 tablespoon butter or neutral oil*

*1/2 tablespoon sugar*

*Salt and pepper*

*Some water*

- (1) Peel the turnips and cut into pieces ¾ inch at the wide end.
- (2) In a sauté pan just big enough to hold them without crowding, bring enough water to cover the turnips to a boil. Add a large pinch of salt. Add the turnips, lower the heat to a simmer and cook the turnips just until they are no longer raw and have softened just enough so a sharp knife can just poke in.
- (3) Drain the turnips, discard the water, and return the turnips to the pan. Place the pan back over the heat, bring heat to medium, and sprinkle the sugar evenly over all. Allow the sugar to caramelize. It will start to turn brown, and you will smell it. (If it smells like it might be burning remove from heat immediately.)
- (4) Add the butter, and swirl around, tossing to coat evenly. Reduce heat to low and cook slowly, tossing to allow the turnips to develop crisp surfaces. Taste occasionally to be sure they are not overcooked—they will turn mushy and bitter.
- (5) Serve as soon as they are done. I like them with roast chicken, braised meat, and seared salmon.