

## frequent feasters

### Dear Frequent Feasters,

It has certainly been a heart-wrenching start to the year with bushfires in Victoria and floods in Queensland – both with devastating consequences. As the PM said 'the worst of nature has brought out the best in humanity'. What these events also do is strengthen our resolve to live each day to the fullest and to be the best we can with everything we do – whether it's at work, at home, staying in touch with friends and family, organising a weekend away or doing that thing we've always wanted to do. From the ashes the phoenix rises.

Flip



### food in focus: fennel



Fennel can be sliced thinly and tossed into salads where it adds a fabulous crunch and freshness with its aniseed flavour. Or munch on a few slices at the end of a meal for a fabulous natural breath freshener!

Fennel's flavour can be quite powerful so only use it in small amounts, alternatively you can blanch it in some boiling water briefly to reduce the intensity.

Fennel is fabulous in soups, stews and other slow cooked dishes like braises. It goes really well with other strongly flavoured foods – like olives and anchovies.

When buying fennel, choose bulbs which are not too large because the other layers can be a bit tough. And choose bulbs which still have feathery tops and a sweet aroma. Fennel will keep in the fridge for 2-3 days. Fennel's best season is mid-autumn til late winter.

### do

Talk about menu envy...the organisers of the 17th Melbourne Food and Wine festival, which kicks off on Saturday 7 March and this year runs for seventeen days has a mouth-watering array of activities, events and opportunities to eat and drink some of the most decadent and delicious dishes and wines. Log onto [www.melbournefoodandwine.com.au](http://www.melbournefoodandwine.com.au) for full details of the 150 metro and 60 regional events and if I can give you one tip – book early to ensure you don't miss out on any epicurean offerings.

### make fennel salad

#### ingredients

1-2 fennel bulbs  
Fingerful of walnuts, roughly chopped  
1 tablespoon capers, roughly chopped  
Handful rocket (or baby spinach leaves or thinly sliced iceberg lettuce)

Mayonnaise  
1 egg yolk  
1 tablespoon seeded mustard  
3 tablespoons lemon juice  
3 tablespoons olive oil/safflower oil

#### method

Remove the tops and bottom and outer layer of the fennel. Save feathery tops and chop finely. Thinly slice the fennel bulbs into wishbone shapes and place in a salad bowl, along with the walnuts, capers and rocket.  
Make mayonnaise by blending all the ingredients. Stir mayonnaise through fennel salad.  
Top with finely chopped feathery tops.

### buy what's in season during autumn?

- Apples
- Bananas
- Raspberries
- Grapes
- Kiwi
- Rhubarb
- Quince
- Avocados
- Capsicum
- Carrot
- Cauliflower
- Celery
- Garlic
- Ginger
- Fennel
- Mushrooms
- Peas
- Potato
- Pumpkin
- Silver beet
- Sweet potato
- Zucchini

The closer you stand to the lighthouse, the darker it gets.

Japanese proverb