

CHINESE CELERY 中國芹菜

93-1-7

(*Apium graveolens*)

Celery is a biennial, slow growing plant. Grown as an annual, its leafy stalks (petioles) are used as a vegetable. They will bloom and produce seeds the next year. Compared to its western counterpart (European type), the Chinese celery (Asiatic type) is relatively small and delicate, but has a very strong flavor. The leaves and leaf stalks are light green in color. The stems are thin and hollow. They are crisp, fragrant, aromatic, and delicious. They add zest to many Chinese dishes. Chinese celery is easier to grow than the western type and the growing time, from transplanting to harvest, is somewhat short.



CHINESE CELERY

HOW TO GROW: Chinese celery grows best in cold, moist soil. In the northern U.S., seeds should be sown indoors in flats and transplanted later. You may sow seeds in the garden, however, because the seeds are extremely small they should be handled very carefully. Plant seeds not more than 1/4 inch deep with vermiculite, peat moss or a mixture of both with some fine soil. Keep 1 foot apart between rows. Seeds germinate in 10-20 days. A large amount of organic materials, such as compost, well rotted manure, etc. is helpful in growth.

WHEN TO PLANT: For early planting, sow seeds in flats indoors 5-6 weeks before the last average frost date. Transplant into the garden after the frost is over and the plants are about 3 inches tall. For fall crops, sow seeds in the garden in July-August.

CARE AND HARVEST: When the seedlings are 3 inches tall, thin to stand, or transplant, about 4 inches apart. Fertilize and water regularly. Plants for fall crops should be protected from heavy frost. Insects do not seem to bother the plants. Harvest when the plant is about 12 inches tall by cutting the bundle of leaves. The time from transplanting to harvesting is about 90 days.

VARIETIES: Chinese celery has a few varieties but not as many as western celery.

1. **Golden Medium:** Leaves are large and yellowish green. They are easily self-blanching. This is the most popular variety used by Chinese.
2. **Hainan Green:** Late variety. Leaves are small and light green. Cannot be self-blanching.

USES: Leaves and leaf stalks can be cut and cooked with meats, or chopped into small pieces and added to soups and stew for flavoring. Leaves may be dried and stored for winter use in soups. Pinch off celery and add to tossed green salad for extra zest.

RECIPES:

1. Fried Chinese Celery

Ingredients:

- 1 lb Celery. Remove outer leaves. Cut the rest into 2 inch sections, then wash and drain.
- 1 tblsp Soysauce
- 1/2 tsp Salt
- 1 tsp Sesame Oil (optional)
- 3 tblsp Corn Oil (or other vegetable oil)
- 1/2 tsp Sugar

Procedure:

1. Heat the oil in a frying pan until hot. Add the celery and stir for 3 minutes.
2. Add soysauce and sugar. Mix well.
3. Add sesame oil and serve.

2. Fried Pork Shreds with Chinese Celery

Ingredients:

- 1 bundle Celery. Remove the old outer parts and cut the rest into shreds 1-1/2 inches long.
- 1/2 lb Pork. Cut into shreds 1-1/2 inches long.
- 1 tblsp Soysauce
- 4 tblsp Vegetable Oil
- 1 tsp Cornstarch
- 1/2 tsp Salt

Procedure:

1. Mix pork shreds with cornstarch, a little water and soysauce.
2. Heat 2 tblsp of vegetable oil in a frying pan and fry the pork shreds.
3. Stir on a brisk fire for 2 minutes.
4. Heat the remaining vegetable oil and fry the celery for 2 minutes. Add the pork shreds and salt.
5. Mix thoroughly and stir for 2 more minutes. Serve.

Note: You may substitute beef for pork. Do not overcook the beef.

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