What To Eat Now: March

March 19th marks the first official day of spring! This March, look for the first snappy tastes of the season in the form of artichokes, radishes, early peas, green garlic, and horseradish.

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In like a lion, out like a lamb is the old saw used to describe March weather, but it's well suited to the food appearing in markets this time of year as well. At the beginning of the month, winter crops are waning, with the gentle young harbingers of spring appearing later in March. Sturdy artichokes and spicy horseradish roots are in season this month, followed by the first tender sugar snap peas and snow peas, mild young green garlic, and small radishes with their mercurial sweet-but-spicy taste.

Artichokes

If you've never worked with fresh artichokes before, make this the year you give them a try! They can be a bit intimidating with their sharp, pointy leaves and bristly choke; but if you can peel and deseed a winter squash, you can prepare an artichoke.

Fun fact: Artichokes are actually a type of thistle from the sunflower family — if not harvested, they'll bloom into stunning purple flowers. In the United States, they're almost exclusively California-grown, with the most common variety by far being the Green Globe. Smaller purple Romanesco and other European varieties may be found in farmer's markets, and are worth a try if you can find them. They've got an unexpected health benefit as well: Artichokes contain the same antioxidants found in cranberries and red wine.

Selecting and storing artichokes

When buying artichokes, they should be fully green (without any browning), heavy for their size, and sport a slightly swollen stem. The leaves (or "bracts") at the tip of the artichoke should be tightly closed. Artichokes dry out quickly, so it's best to eat them as soon as possible, or store in the crisper for just a few days. Once cut, artichokes are susceptible to discoloration; you can avoid this by placing the cut artichokes in a bowl of water with lemon or vinegar, or simply rubbing the exposed surfaces with lemon.

Preparing artichokes

Before cooking, you should always remove the tough outermost leaves. If preparing whole, slice off the top third or so of the artichoke — just enough to remove the thorny points of the leaves. The stems are edible and can be left on; they just need to be peeled before cooking. The choke — that's the hairy part at the core — is inedible and should be removed on a full-sized artichoke. (If you're working with baby artichokes, the choke is soft and can be eaten.) Use a paring knife or spoon to dig down between the center of the leaves and remove the choke if leaving the artichoke whole; for preparations where the artichoke is sliced in half vertically, this is obviously an easier task! The "heart," the most prized part of the artichoke, is the base of the artichoke found directly underneath the choke and above the stem.

Artichokes have an earthy, buttery flavor that pairs well with acids like lemon and vinegar, as well as salty cheeses. They're commonly stuffed, roasted, fried, and marinated. Canned artichoke hearts are often used in dips, mixed in with pastas, or served as part of an antipasto spread. Check out these recipes for some ideas to get started, or search Yummly for even more.

GO TO RECIPE ›

Roasted Artichokes with Lemony Leek Dressing

FEASTING AT HOME

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Chicken Piccata with Artichokes

WILLIAMS SONOMA - TA...

★★★★½

Spinach and Artichoke Dip

YUMMLY

★★★★☆

Spicy Marinated Artichokes

WILLIAMS-SONOMA

Jewish Fried Artichokes

TORI AVEY

The Ultimate Stuffed Artichoke

COOKING ON THE WEE...

★★★★★

Artichoke Lemon Hummus

THREE OLIVES BRANCH

★★★★☆

Radishes

Like a toddler, radishes can swing from sweet and mild to sharp and spicy depending on their age and environment. The name comes from the Latin word for "root," as these brasssicas are generally grown for the taproot that grows underground. The two most common types are the round red Cherry Belle and the white Daikon radish, although many more varieties show up at farmers markets, including the longer white-tipped French Breakfast and Bunny Tail radishes. The Watermelon radish is a particular variety of Daikon that features a stunning pink center with flecks of green nearing the white skin; these are particularly well-suited to slicing for visual drama on the plate.

When purchasing radishes, the leaves should be green and perky, not yellow or dry; however, holes in the leaves from garden pests are common and not harmful. The radish itself should be firm and not have any cracks.

Fresh radishes will be crunchy, with a bright and zingy flavor that livens up salads and toasts. Cooking radishes tempers the spiciness, yielding a mellower flavor closer to that of a parsnip. Radishes pair well with lemon juice, salt, and herbs, but don't need any added pepper as they bring their own spicy undertones. Radishes are commonly sliced and **pickled**, and then can be used as a condiment to top tacos, burgers, and sandwiches, or to add Asian flair to a multitude of dishes. They can also be used to make **radish butter** so you can add a bit of peppery spice to your sautes or sandwiches. These recipes offer some more unusual ways to use this March crop:

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Radish Ceviche

I LOVE MY FOOD

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Mustard & Turmeric Roasted Radishes

THE CHEERFUL KITCHEN

★★★★★

Ginger Carrot Radish Salad

HEALTHY SEASONAL RE...

★★★★⯪

Spring Radish Salad

PBS

★★★⯪☆

Fresh Radish Tartines with Cultured…

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Radish Leaf Pesto

ATTAINABLE-SUSTAINABLE

★★★★☆

Radish Chips

SIMPLE COMFORT FOOD

Snow Peas & Sugar Snap Peas

Snow peas and sugar snap peas are two closely related varieties of peas with edible pods. Peas (which are considered a legume) are dense in nutrients and can be quite filling due to their starch content. For both of these spring pea types, you eat the whole pod, not just the peas inside.

Searching For Snow Peas

Snow peas are instantly recognizable by their flat pods and the tiny peas inside, discernable as small lumps within the pod. A perfectly ripe snow pea is delicate; if you hold it up to the light, you should be able to see the peas inside. They do have a "string" on one side which you can remove with a quick tug.

Superb Sugar Snap Peas

Crunchy sugar snap peas, on the other hand, are a cross between the snow pea and classic English peas. Like snow peas, sugar snap peas have an edible pod, but like English peas, they have a rounder shape and larger, distinct peas inside. Fresh sugar snap peas will have supple stems that aren't dried out, with plump peas inside that are juicy but not allowed to grow too large: If the peas are large enough that they touch one another inside the pod, then they're overly mature. Another test? Pop open a pod and squeeze one of the peas: If it breaks cleanly into two halves, it's overripe. Instead, it should turn into a mash between your fingers.

Peas are versatile and pair well with many flavors. The snow pea is a favorite for Asian stir-fries and mixed vegetables. Sugar snap peas are excellent eaten raw out of hand or served with dips due to their pleasing crunch and naturally sweet flavor. In true form to "What grows together, goes together," you'll notice that several of the recipes below also feature young March radishes.

GO TO RECIPE >

Sheet Pan Sichuan Chicken and Vegetables

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Yum'd

Beef and Snap Pea Stir-Fry

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Snow Pea and Napa Slaw

KERI GLASSMAN NUTRIT...

Sheet Pan Hoisin Salmon and Snow Pe...

WHOLE AND HEAVENLY ...

Julienned Snow Pea and Radish Salad

SIMPLE SEASONAL

Sugar Snap Pea and Carrot Soba Nood...

COOKIE AND KATE

★★★★☆

Parmesan Panko Sugar Snap Peas

MELISSA'S SOUTHERN S...

Green garlic

March is the very beginning of the growing season for garlic, which takes a fair amount of time to transform into mature bulbs. Until then, we have green garlic!

Getting To Know Garlic

Also known as spring garlic, green garlic is simply young garlic that's harvested before cloves have the chance to form. With its small white bulb and long green shoots, green garlic looks very similar to spring onions or scallions but can be identified by its flatter leaves and tell-tale garlic scent. Green garlic shouldn't be confused with garlic scapes, which are the budding flowers of the garlic plant that appear halfway through the growing season. As with mature garlic, green garlic is touted for its antibacterial properties and benefits to the circulatory system.

Green garlic has a milder taste than full-grown cloves, and is likewise much more delicate in nature: unlike a head of garlic which can be stored at room temperature, green garlic should be refrigerated. Fresh green garlic will keep 4-5 days, wrapped in damp paper towels, in the crisper. But like most early spring crops, it's always best to eat it as soon as possible after it's harvested.

While you can certainly use green garlic in place of garlic cloves in recipes, do keep its unique flavor profile in mind. Since it's milder than mature garlic, it's well suited to dishes that don't feature powerful spices, so the green garlic doesn't get overwhelmed. Conversely, when cooking with delicate ingredients (such as other young spring vegetables), green garlic can help ensure that the flavors of all the produce in the dish don't get overwhelmed by the strong flavors of a garlic clove. Try simply grilling the green garlic whole (see the recipe below), or sautéing it to use with pasta, peas, and seafood.

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Grilled Green Garlic

8.ATE@EIGHT

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Green Garlic Purée

TASTING TABLE

Green Garlic Pistachio Pesto

KELLY JONES NUTRITION

Green Garlic Broth

POPSUGAR.COM

Green Garlic Risotto

SALT PEPPER SKILLET

Asparagus and Green Garlic Pastries

THYME FOR COOKING B...

Fermented Hot Green Garlic

BON APPÉTIT

Horseradish

Like radishes, horseradish is a member of the cabbage family. In fact, it's actually considered an herb, not a vegetable; but unlike most herbs, the roots are the prize instead of the leaves. Also like radishes, horseradish is known for adding heat to dishes when used, although the flavor goes beyond "peppery" to downright pungent.

Horseradish is quite easy to grow — and grows quickly — but gardeners should be aware of its invasive tendencies. A particularly rainy spring will be a boon to horseradish farmers, as more water produces better flavor. When shopping, look for firm, unblemished roots that aren't dry or shriveled. Unlike some of the green vegetables that come to market in March, horseradish is quite hardy and will last for several weeks stored in the refrigerator. You can keep horseradish even longer by grating the fresh roots and then freezing them in ice cube trays and storing for several months in the freezer.

Working With Horseradish

Horseradish is used to add a pleasant peppery heat to sauces (most commonly cocktail sauce for shrimp and horseradish cream to accompany roast beef). Once grated, horseradish will begin to lose its spicy edge fairly quickly, so if the grated root is too hot, simply set it aside and wait for it to mellow out for an hour or two. Like it hot? You can arrest this process by mixing it with vinegar to retain the peppery edge; this is how the prepared horseradish found on grocery store shelves is made.

Yes, horseradish is quite notorious for its heat — and the accompanying fumes. Like onions, the fumes are quite strong and can cause your eyes to tear up, so be prepared to open a window! When using a food processor to prepare homemade horseradish (a mix of the root with salt and vinegar), be ready for a burst of intense fumes to escape when you remove the lid. Consider yourself warned.

Horseradish is a traditional food for the Jewish Passover Seder meal, where it serves as the required bitter herb with the ability to bring tears to the eyes. It's often served as chrain, a beet and horseradish mixture, and provides a stark bold contrast to mellow foods like gefilte fish, with which it's often served. As a general rule, the sharp taste of horseradish is good for brightening many otherwise bland foods (it's particularly good in mashed potatoes), for cutting through very salty meats, and for tempering sweet fruits and veggies. It's also a favorite ingredient for apple-cider-vinegar-based tonics; see the recipe for "fire cider" below.

GO TO RECIPE >

Homemade Preserved Horseradish

SERIOUS EATS

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Boneless Prime Rib Roast

YUMMLY

★★★★★

FRESH HORSERADISH WITH BEETS

PANNING THE GLOBE

Craft Your Own Fire Cider!

THE MOUNTAIN ROSE B...

★★★★★

Lemon Horseradish Butter

LEITE'S CULINARIA

Potato-Horseradish Latkes

INGRIDSTEVENS

Horseradish Smashed Potatoes

VEGETARIAN TIMES

For even more recipe inspiration, try some of these related searches on Yummly:

- Horseradish dips
- Spring vegetables
- Artichoke pastas

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What to Eat Now