

FARMER TED ON BROCCOLI

As kids, growing up in the Midwest, we were served our broccoli with Velveeta cheese; it wasn't until later in life that I learned how tasty fresh, crisp broccoli could be. Now one of my favorite ways to have broccoli is in a Thai recipe containing broccoli and tofu in a peanut sauce (see the recipe below).

We've just come in from planting the first of your fall broccoli—about 3,000 plants in four long beds so far. We'll plant three varieties in all, each supposed to mature at successive intervals of about ten days. Jan and I have been planting for much of the day, aided by a wonderfully read book on tape, the last in the Harry Potter series. Our backs and knees ache from the planting, and although it is not unpleasant, we have resolved to do more of our transplanting by machine. In order to do this, we'll need a tractor upgrade, something we'll try to have in place by the start of next season.

It might seem early to think about fall crops, our summer shares having just started, but broccoli requires about 70 days to form heads. The broccoli that has appeared in your shares recently was seeded back in March, and planted in April. Each year we learn more about growing broccoli, which is been particularly challenging for us in the spring. We have much more to learn. For having had such short lives, the broccoli in your shares has had quite a past. First, there were the flea beetles, small black jumping insects that leave pinholes in the foliage. Row covers kept them at bay early on; later we used a spray containing the beneficial fungus, Spinosad. Then came the hail, which you know about. I thought it had completely killed the plants, but they bounced back with incredible vigor. Then came the rainless month of June, which necessitated some four or five irrigations. And, finally, for much of mid-July, during which the broccoli heads were maturing, the plants experienced warm and sunny days alternating with warm and rainy days—conditions which spoiled a good many of the broccoli florets. But we keep on trying. I hope you enjoy this week's harvest. With luck, there should be more in the fall.

PRESIDENTIAL BROCCOLI QUOTES

"I do not like broccoli. And I haven't liked it since I was a little kid, and my mother made me eat it. And I'm President of the United States, and I'm not going to eat any more broccoli."

- George H.W. Bush

"It's okay. I'm not nearly as turned off by it as my dad is. If you want to get into it, I kind of like the top of the broccoli. I don't like the stalk itself."

- George W. Bush

RECIPE

Broccoli and Tofu in Spicy Peanut Sauce
From *The Enchanted Broccoli Forest* by Mollie Katzen

1 pound firm tofu
1 lb broccoli
1 to 2 tablespoons peanut or canola oil
2 cups chopped onion
1 tablespoon grated fresh ginger
4 medium cloves garlic, minced
3/4 tsp salt
2 scallions, minced

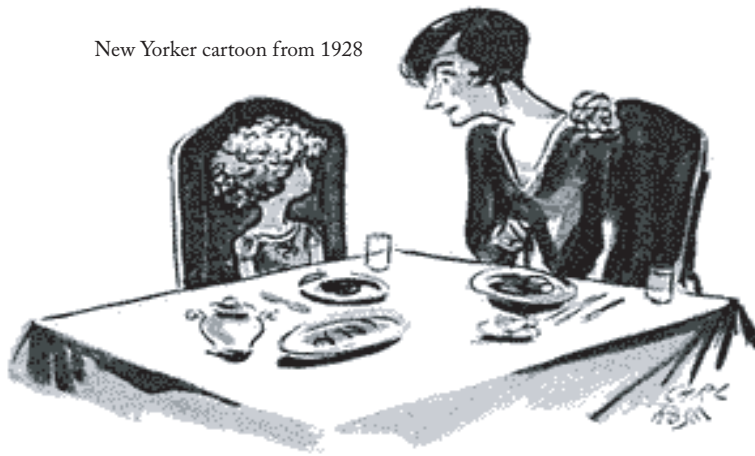
Spicy Peanut Sauce (below)

Start a pan of rice to serve with this dish. Cut tofu into 1" cubes and place in saucepan. Cover with water and bring to boil. Lower heat and simmer for 10 minutes. Drain and set aside. Chop broccoli florets. Heat skillet for 1 minute, add oil and onion, then cook over high heat for 2 minutes. Add broccoli, ginger, garlic and salt. Continue to heat for 5 minutes, or until broccoli is bright green and tender. Stir in the tofu and scallions and cook for 2 to 3 more minutes. Add the sauce and stir until everything is well coated. Serve over rice.

Spicy Peanut Sauce
3/4 cup good peanut butter
3/4 cup hot water
6 tablespoons vinegar
3 tablespoons soy sauce
3 tablespoons blackstrap molasses
cayenne to taste.

Place the peanut butter and hot water in a small bowl and mash together until the mixture is uniform. Whisk in remaining ingredients. Set aside until needed in the stir fry.

New Yorker cartoon from 1928



"It's broccoli, dear."
"I say it's spinach, and I say the hell with it."