

Eat Leeks!

Leeks are related to garlic and onions but have a much subtler, sweeter and more sophisticated flavour. They can be used to enrich soups or stews and they partner brilliantly with potato and with cheese to form tasty side-dishes and suppers that comfort and satisfy throughout the autumn and winter.

HISTORY - Leeks have been cultivated at least since the time of the Ancient Egyptians and are depicted in surviving tomb paintings from that period. The Romans considered the leek a superior vegetable and Emperor Nero got through so many he gained the nickname *Porrophagus* (leek eater); he is reported to have thought that eating leeks would improve his singing voice.

Today the leek is grown widely across northern Europe and Asia - from Ireland to northern China - and delicious regional dishes such as *cock-a-leekie* and *vichyssoise* have spread across the globe.

BIOLOGY - *Allium porrum* - the version of the leek cultivated in Europe - is a member of the onion family. It thrives in cooler climates and is tolerant of frost, hence its great popularity as a winter vegetable.

BUYING - Go for small or medium size leeks; large leeks (more than about an inch in diameter) are likely to be tough and woody. Leaf tops should be fresh and green, the root end should be unblemished and yield very slightly to pressure. Buy more than needed (around double by weight) to allow for losses due to trimming.

BUYING - Stored loosely wrapped in plastic (to keep them from drying out and to contain their smell) they will keep in the fridge for a week.

COOKING - Scan the code below to view the recipe for '*Leeks vinaigrette with eggs*' on the seasonal recipes blog.



or visit: qmulsustainability.wordpress.com/recipes