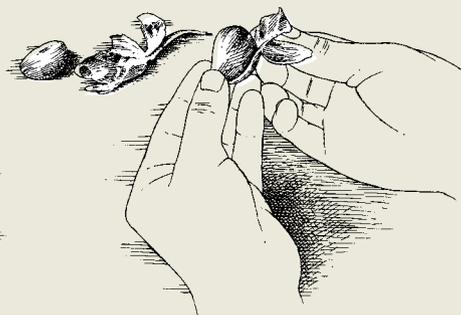
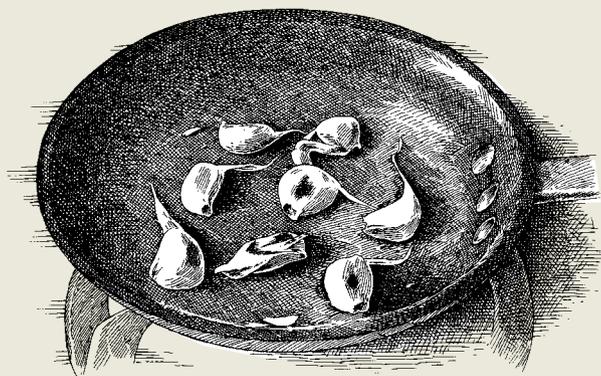
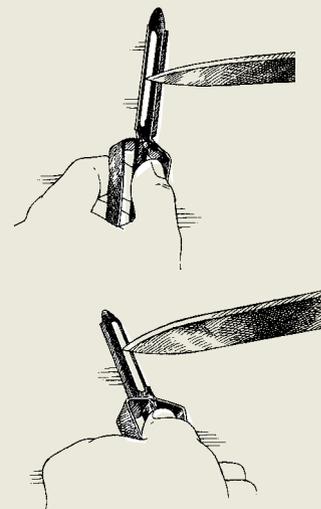


Chefs' Vegetable Preparation Tips

When it comes to vegetables, there are some that can seem just too cumbersome, messy, or prone to pitfalls to prepare often. Even with the more straightforward vegetables it's common to wonder when carving with a knife: Is there an easier way? *Cook's* posed this question to chefs and cookbook authors across the country, who in turn shared some of their favorite tips for the quick and simple preparation of vegetables at home. By Maryellen Driscoll

SHARPENING PEELERS

Mary Sue Milliken and Susan Feniger have a quick method for restoring the edge of a dull vegetable peeler. Scrape the back side, between the blades, with the back tip of a paring knife to remove burrs. Then scrape the front side using the knife's back tip. Milliken and Feniger are chef-owners of the Los Angeles restaurant Border Grill and hosts of TVFN's "Too Hot Tamales."



PEELING GARLIC

While attending John Ash's course on seasonal vegetarian cooking at the Culinary Institute of America in California's Napa Valley, one of our editors learned this tip for peeling garlic and slightly tempering its flavor. Toast the garlic cloves in a dry skillet on medium-high heat for about five minutes, shaking the skillet periodically to turn the cloves.

Remove the cloves from heat when the skins have begun to turn golden brown. After cooling, the once-sticky skins readily peel off. When testing this method, we also found that if you leave the cloves on the heat for about 15 minutes more, they soften to the creamy consistency of roasted garlic. Ash is the culinary director of Fetzer Vineyards and author of *From the Earth to the Table* (Dutton, 1995).

REMOVING BEET STAINS

To remove red beet stains from your cutting board or your hands, Julia Child recommends rubbing the stained area with salt, rinsing, then scrubbing with soap. She repeats the process until the stains are removed. Child is a world-renowned teacher, author, and cook.

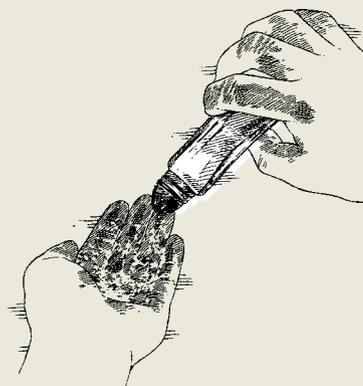
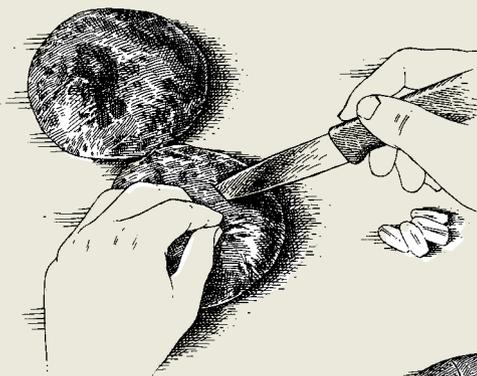
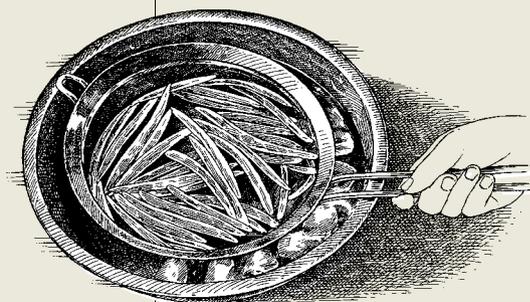


Illustration: John Burgoyne



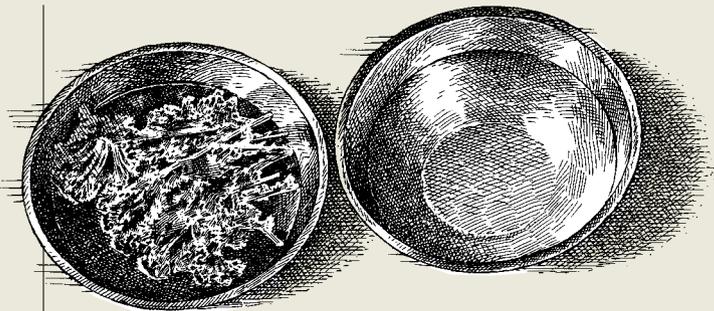
FLAVORING PORTOBELLOS

Steve Raichlen has a simple technique for adding garlic and herb flavorings to whole-cooked portobellos. Using the tip of a paring knife, he makes 10 to 12 narrow slits in the top of the cap and inserts a sliver of garlic and a strip of sage leaf into each slit. Raichlen is a Miami-based cooking instructor and author of many cookbooks, including *The Barbecue Bible* (Workman, 1998).



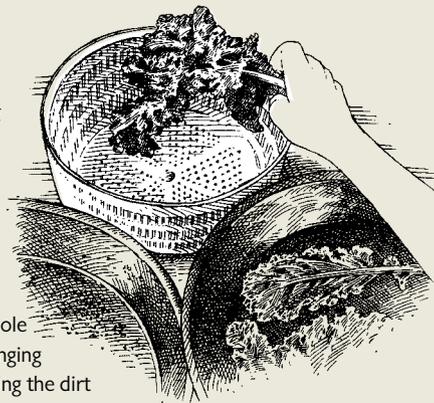
QUICKER BLANCHING

With green vegetables, shocking them in ice water after blanching is essential to preserving their color. To do so quickly, Norman Van Aken recommends laying a strainer, sieve, or perforated pan in the bowl of ice water so you don't have to fish for the vegetables when they are ready to be pulled out. Van Aken is the chef-owner of Norman's in Miami, Florida, and author of *Norman's New World Cuisine* (Random House, 1997).



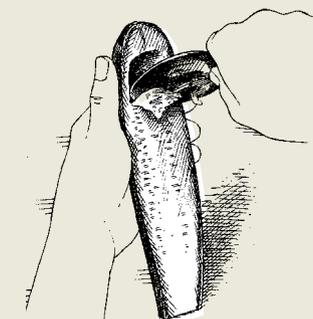
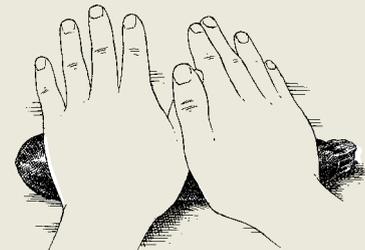
CLEANING GREENS

To clean greens that tend to be sandy, such as kale, farm-stand spinach, whole heads of leafy lettuce, and arugula, the late Richard Sax recommended plunging them into a sink or dish pan of warm water. This relaxes the leaves, loosening the dirt for easier rinsing. The greens are then rinsed in a colander, crisped in several changes of cold water if limp, and dried in a salad spinner. Sax's most recent book is *Get In There & Cook* (Clarkson Potter, 1997), published posthumously.



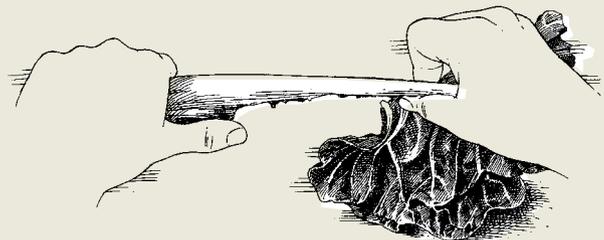
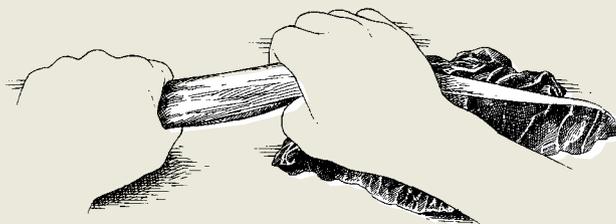
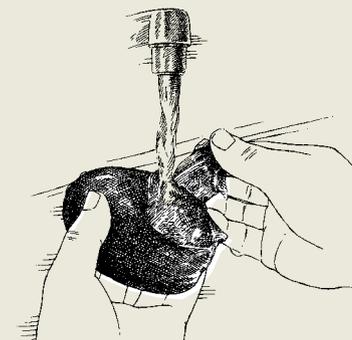
SEEDING ZUCCHINI

For easy removal of seeds when halving and stuffing zucchini or eggplant, Paula Wolfert rolls the vegetable with slight pressure under the palms of her hands to soften the insides and loosen the seeds. She then halves the vegetables lengthwise and scoops out the seeds with a spoon. Paula Wolfert is the author of many Mediterranean-based cookbooks, including *Mediterranean Grains & Greens* (HarperCollins, August 1998).



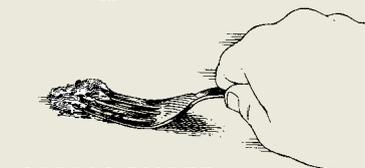
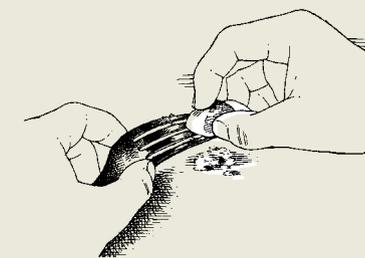
SKINNING TOMATOES

During tomato harvest, when time to can batches of sauce is limited, David Hirsch freezes Roma and other medium-size tomatoes whole in a freezer bag. When it's time to retrieve a frozen tomato for a stew or sauce, he simply rubs off the skin by placing it under hot running tap water. Hirsch is a chef at the Moosewood Restaurant in Ithaca, New York, and author of *The Moosewood Restaurant Kitchen Garden* (Fireside, 1992).



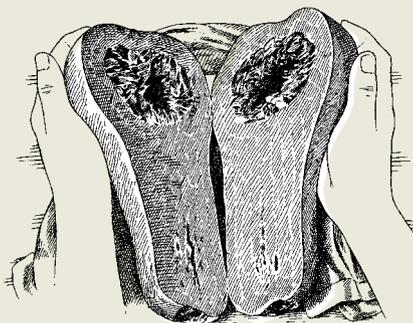
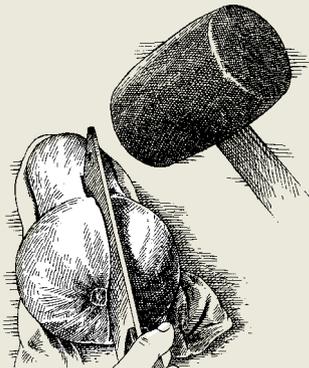
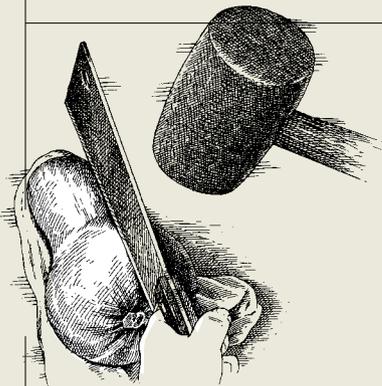
DE-RIBBING GREENS

To separate chard leaves, beet leaves, or large spinach leaves from their ribs, Steve Johnson loosely folds the leaf in half along the stem, grasps the folded leaf with one hand, and pulls it away from the rib. The leaf will separate cleanly and easily. Johnson is the chef and co-owner of The Blue Room in Cambridge, Massachusetts.



GARLIC PUREE IN SMALL AMOUNTS

We like Alice Waters's solution for pureeing small amounts of raw garlic, as for a vinaigrette. Hold a fork with its tines resting face down on a cutting board. Rub a peeled clove of garlic rapidly back and forth against the tines close to their points. Mash any leftover large chunks with the fork turned over. Waters is the owner of Chez Panisse in Berkeley, California, and author of many cookbooks, including *Chez Panisse Vegetables* (Harper, 1996).



CUTTING SQUASH

Deborah Madison uses a meat cleaver to cut through large, hard squashes. She places the cleaver lengthwise along the squash, then strikes the blunt edge of the cleaver with a mallet to drive it through and open the squash. (We recommend wrapping a damp cloth around the squash to hold it in place.) Madison is the founding chef at San Francisco's Green's restaurant and author of *Vegetarian Cooking for Everyone* (Broadway Books, 1997).