

FARMER IN THE FIELD



FAVA BEANS

By Bonnie Swank

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We're not really sure when we started growing fava beans or why since neither one of us grew up eating them. It was probably a farmers' market customer who requested this delicious legume and Dick thought "why not". It seems fava beans have been a staple in kitchens throughout the Mediterranean and the Middle East for centuries. I hadn't even heard of fava beans until the movie *Silence of the Lambs* and Hannibal Lecter's infamous line "I ate his liver with some *favava* beans and nice chianti".

This unique bean goes by many different names the most common being broad beans, horse beans, English beans, Windsor beans and faba beans. Fresh favas can be used in almost every type of dish except for desert, I think? At least not in my kitchen. The downside to this rather large bean is the preparation, it's a little time consuming. The pods are large and when opened reveal a cozy and fuzzy interior with the beans nestled in as if napping. If this wasn't enough protection the beans have a tough outer skin that still needs to be removed. To do so you will need to drop them into boiling water for 30 seconds and then directly into an ice bath to cool. Once removed from the bath you need to pinch off the tip of the skin and squeeze the bean out. Be careful because these slippery guys can get away from you and if you're not careful the bean will split into halves. This process reminds me blanching almonds when I was growing up, it was always so much fun standing at the kitchen counter popping the nuts out of their skins.

When buying fava beans don't be fooled by their size, one pound of favas can render from 1/3 to 1 cup of beans. Look for pods resembling a giant green bean with bulging sides. Avoid immature or large older pods. Look for unblemished bright green pods, a little bronzing is O.K.

If you place the beans in a plastic bag and directly into the crisper drawer they be last up to a week happy in their little cocoons. Despite the extra work I would highly suggest taking advantage of this short season, ours goes to mid-July, and try this delectable treat.