

## turmeric-spiced root vegetables with kaffir lime yogurt and mint chutney

Turmeric is a rhizome or rootstock of a South Asian member of the ginger family. As the major ingredient in curry and a cheaper alternative to saffron, it is commonly used in Indian, South Asian, and Middle Eastern cooking as much it seems, for its color as for its flavor. In fact, in the past turmeric was used for dyeing textiles and fabrics, for making cosmetics, and even for religious and cultural ceremonies, Hindu and other, especially in India. Turmeric is considered to have medicinal uses and is even being studied currently for its potential cancer-fighting properties.

In this dish, the turmeric pairs up with cumin, coriander, and paprika to spice up roasted root vegetables and give them an unexpected and exotic twist. First the vegetables are roasted in a very hot oven, an unorthodox method we first came up with at Lucques. We were having problems when working with baby vegetables, unable to get the sear and caramelization we wanted without overcooking the vegetables. Even with our deck oven cranked to 550°F, the results were either tender and pale or nicely browned and mushy. My longest-running kitchen employee, Rodolfo Aguado, who started working for me as a surly fifteen-year-old dishwasher at Campanile and now runs our very busy catering department (and has three kids of his own), came up with the brilliant idea of preheating the sheet pans before placing the vegetables on them. It really works wonders: you get a great roasted sear and can control the tenderness-versus-mushiness issue as well.

9 small or 3 medium carrots, peeled, stems attached if possible  
9 small or 3 medium parsnips, peeled, stems attached if possible  
6 small or 2 medium turnips  
6 small or 2 medium rutabagas, peeled  
6 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil  
1 tablespoon thyme leaves  
½ teaspoon cumin seeds  
¼ teaspoon coriander seeds  
3 tablespoons unsalted butter, softened  
¼ teaspoon smoked paprika  
½ teaspoon ground turmeric  
1 cup Greek-style yogurt  
1 tablespoon kaffir lime juice, plus ½ teaspoon finely grated zest  
2 ounces turnip or mustard greens, cleaned and sliced  
1 recipe Mint Chutney (recipe follows)  
Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper

Preheat the oven to 425°F. Slice the carrots and parsnips in half lengthwise. If they are on the bigger side, then slice each half lengthwise again, into long quarters.

Clean the turnips and rutabagas, cut off the tails, and trim the stems, leaving  $\frac{1}{4}$  inch of the stems. Cut small turnips and rutabagas in halves or quarters; if they're larger, cut them in half and then into  $\frac{1}{2}$ -inch wedges.

Toss the vegetables with the olive oil, thyme, 1 teaspoon salt, and some freshly ground pepper. Preheat two heavy-duty baking sheets in the oven for 3 to 4 minutes. Carefully remove the baking sheets from the oven, place the vegetables on them, and roast them, tossing a few times, for about 25 minutes, until they are tender and a little caramelized. While the vegetables are roasting, toast the cumin seeds in a small pan over medium-high heat about 2 minutes, until the seeds release their aroma. Using a mortar and pestle, pound the cumin, and transfer it to a small bowl. Repeat with the coriander, and add it, with the softened butter, paprika, and turmeric, to the bowl. Stir to combine well.

Stir the yogurt, lime juice, lime zest, and a heaping  $\frac{1}{4}$  teaspoon salt together in a small bowl. Taste for seasoning.

When the vegetables are done, combine them in one pan and toss in the turnip greens and the turmeric butter. The heat of the roasted vegetables will melt the butter and wilt the greens. Taste for seasoning. Arrange the vegetables on a platter, and top with the kaffir lime yogurt. Spoon the mint chutney over and around the yogurt and vegetables.

#### mint chutney

Using a mortar and pestle, pound the garlic and a pinch of salt to a paste, and transfer to a small bowl. Pound the mint and parsley, and add it to the garlic. Add the olive oil, lemon juice,  $\frac{1}{4}$  teaspoon salt, and  $\frac{1}{8}$  teaspoon ground pepper, and stir well to combine. Taste for balance and seasoning.

- 1 small clove garlic
- 1 cup coarsely chopped mint
- $\frac{1}{4}$  cup coarsely chopped flat-leaf parsley
- $\frac{1}{2}$  cup extra-virgin olive oil
- 2 tablespoons freshly squeezed lemon juice
- Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper

Whenever I see root vegetables in a recipe, I think of Cabernet Franc, which, at its core, has a vegetal flavor profile that is much like that of the vegetables themselves. Since this is a fairly delicate and herby preparation, I would stay with a wine that is lighter in body, to keep things in balance. For Cabernet Franc, wine from the Bourgueil appellation of the Loire Valley is ideal. Here the wine is lighter in body and shows more bright red fruit and acidity than in other areas. The wine's elegance and delicacy will be in balance with the overall weight of the dish, while its greener elements will mesh with the mint in the chutney.

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