

Taccole: My Favorite Green Beans

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Some of my favorite green beans are just now showing up in the markets. These are the green beans with larger, flattened pods that are usually called Romano beans when American seed companies sell them. In Italy we call these fresh beans taccole (tack-o-lay).

Some people also call them piattoni or "big flat ones."

Not only do these beans deliver all the taste and crunch of green beans, but they are pretty big and have an awful lot of flesh compared to a regular green bean.

This is good for both the cook and gardener, as they are easier to harvest and easier to prepare just because one needs less beans to fill the bowl.

There are two main kinds of taccole in the markets: the green ones the pale yellow ones.

The yellow beans have a slightly sweeter flavor, but we prefer the green ones in our kitchen.

How We Eat Them

We eat these beans steamed like regular green beans, and in main dishes such as pasta with pesto and taccole. The taccole also mix very well with potatoes and cheese in making casserole sorts of dishes.

When lightly steamed, the taccole are nicely crunchy, but when we make them with pasta we usually cook them a bit longer, at which point they become softer and deliver a sensation of more bean flesh per bite, which is quite satisfying when one is really hungry.

Planting Them--And the Trouble with Snails

I have planted a lot of beans in the garden this year, and they're just now starting to grab onto the trellis supports and climb upward.

I'll admit that this is my third planting, (!) because the first planting more than a month ago was into soil that was too cold and did not warm as I had hoped it would, and lots of the second planting was eaten by snails as soon as it germinated.

Now it's really warm, so that slows the snails down, and speeds up the seed germination, and everything's super.

I have trouble with snails.

I don't want to use metaldehyde products, which includes essentially every snail bait.

In the states I used a powder to make the soil surface annoying to snails and slugs, and I'm going to have to try to find that same stuff, (ferrous sulphate of some sort), somewhere in Italy.

I'm pretty sure it's organic acceptable, because I ate some once to demonstrate that it's not a poison. Tart, as I recall, but the snails can't stand it.

In the bean plots I've planted all climbers this year, because climbing beans on trellises expand the surface growing area in my postage stamp planting areas.

The bush beans produce much more quickly, but over the course of the season, the pole beans produce a larger quantity.

My main planting is the old American variety Blue Lake, which is also the most popular variety here in Italy.

I'm also growing a row of taccole, a row of purple Trionfo Violetto beans, and a row of red Borloto beans for making dry beans that we'll add to soups this fall. All of these different varieties are *Phaseolus vulgaris*.

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