

Spicy-Sweet Green Beans

Salt and Serenity

Mark Bittman created this genius recipe. It is from his book, “**The Food Matters Cookbook.**” This paste is also great on edamame, asparagus or broccoli.

Salt

1 pound green beans

1/2 cup whole almonds (toasted)

3 garlic cloves

1 or 2 dried hot red chiles (or 1 teaspoon dried red pepper flakes)

3 tablespoons olive oil

1/3 cup chopped shallots

2 tablespoons honey

3 tablespoons soy sauce

Black pepper

1. Bring a large pot of water to a boil and salt it. Add the beans and cook until crisp-tender, about 2 minutes, depending on the size of the beans. Shock the beans in a bowl of ice water to stop the cooking and drain again (this can be done up to a day ahead of time).

2. Put the almonds, garlic, and chiles in a food processor and process; while the machine is running, add a tablespoon or 2 of the oil to get the mixture moving. Continue to process until you have a thick paste.

3. Put the remaining olive oil in a large skillet and cook the shallots over medium heat, stirring occasionally, until they're just soft, about 3 minutes. Add the almond paste and continue cooking for another couple of minutes, then add the honey and soy sauce. Cook for another minute or 2 over high heat, stirring constantly, before adding the green beans. Toss to coat the beans well in the almond-shallot mixture and cook just until the beans are warmed through; if the paste becomes too thick, add a tablespoon or 2 of water to thin it out. Sprinkle with salt and pepper and serve hot or at room temperature.

Garlicky Green Beans. Use pine nuts instead of the almonds, omit the chiles, and proceed through Step 2. In Step 3, add 1/2 cup good-quality chopped black olives along with the pine nut paste, and instead of the soy sauce, use 2 to 3 tablespoons balsamic vinegar with the honey. Garnish with Parmesan cheese.