



The Houston Chef who cooks the most Plant It Forward vegetables each week!

As some of you know, the owners of Bridgeway Software in Bellaire were the social entrepreneurs behind the creation of Plant It Forward. They have not only chosen to give back to the community through Plant It Forward, but they are also invested in the health of their employees. A few years ago, Bridgeway hired a chef to provide healthy lunches for its employees. The majority of the vegetables that the chef prepares come straight from the Plant It Forward Farms!



Chef Nik Botello is the corporate chef for Bridgeway. He was born in Houston and raised in a small town between San Antonio and Austin. He spent most of his childhood playing sports and getting dirty outside. Some of his favorite memories were pitching in little league all-star games and jumping off 20 foot cliffs (into the lake) that were within walking distance from his home!

Nik became interested in cooking around the 5<sup>th</sup> or 6<sup>th</sup> grade, when he was inspired by food and cooking shows on PBS about the world's greatest chefs. His first job in high school was at a pizza and BBQ joint called The Purple Garlic. He learned to stretch and cook pizza very quickly there. He also learned a thing or two about Texas BBQ that summer.

Nik attended culinary school at the Art Institute in Houston and worked as a kitchen manager after graduation. One day, he read about an Art Institute graduate that had recently opened a fine dining "Latin fusion" restaurant in San Antonio and by the next Monday he was working for Chef Brian West at Cafe Paladar! He worked there for about three years and owes a lot to the ex-comedian and now current instructor at the Culinary Institute of America. Since then he has worked as the Sous Chef for Ruggles Green, the first Certified Green Restaurant in Houston and spent a summer in California working as a corporate chef for Facebook and Google. Nick enjoys working with local vegetables from Plant It Forward because it is a challenge to take something that is traditionally viewed as a side dish and turn it into an entrée. When asked about his favorite from Plant It Forward- he says he enjoys working with the Mexican marigold mint and the French sorrel the most. Nik enjoys the art aspect of cooking as much as he does eating the food and Bridgeway employees really love Nik's cooking!

## Farm News

Tomatoes and squash are at the end of their season and new crops such as okra, Malabar spinach, sweet potato spinach, eggplant, roselle, long beans, cucumbers, melons, and butternut squash are coming in.

Adrien Ikaba was on Fox News Saturday morning at his Fondren farm stand. The story brought several new customers to the stand!

The farmers are working early and late, with breaks from the heat in the middle of the day. They are also planning their fall planting crops, and the seeds will be ordered in the next few days.

## Farm Share Registration

It's that time again! The next 16-week Farm Share season will begin the week of September 8<sup>th</sup>. If you sign-up by July 31<sup>st</sup> you will get the early bird discount of 5% off! [Follow this link to register and you will have fresh, organic and local vegetables for the rest of the year!](#)

# RECIPES

This week's bountiful vegetables are long beans! All recipes below are courtesy of Chef Nik Botello

## Thai style long beans

2 bunches of long beans  
1/4 cup - shallots or green onions  
1/4 cup - ginger  
2 Tbs - sesame oil  
4-5 Tbs - fish sauce  
5-6 Tbs - light soy sauce (I like little soya brand the best. It's really tasty)  
2-3 Tbs - brown sugar  
2-3 Tbs - Thai chili sauce  
1/2 cup - roughly chopped basil leaves (tightly packed)

Begin with a large pot of salted water and bring it to a boil. Meanwhile snip or cut the ends off the long beans. You can cut the beans into bite sized pieces but I find that cutting them after they are cooked to be best. Blanch the long beans whole for about 8 minutes, or until tender. "Shock" the beans in ice water for 2 minutes after they come out of your salted water. At this point you can cut them into bite sizes.

While the beans are blanching, mince your shallots and ginger. Also measure your sauces and chop your basil.

In a non-stick pan, preferably a 10 inch skillet, heat your sesame oil on medium high heat. As your oil begins to smoke sauté your shallots and ginger. Before they begin to brown, add your long beans (the beans should be completely dry at this point). Toss the remaining ingredients in the skillet, the basil should be added last.

Feel free to adjust the flavors as you like! Some people may prefer more fish sauce, soy or maybe ginger. Have fun!

\*Toasted peanuts and cilantro would also go great with this side dish!

## Country style long beans

2 bunches long beans  
1/2 Lbs. - bacon  
1.5 cups - onions  
3 Tbs. - minced garlic  
1/4 cup - toasted almond slices or slivers  
1/4 cup - green onion tops

Begin with a large pot of salted water and bring it to a boil. Small dice your bacon and onions. Cook your bacon until it is crispy and reserve the bacon grease.

Meanwhile, snip or cut the ends off the long beans. You can cut the beans into bite sized pieces but I find that cutting them after they are cooked to be best. Blanch the long beans whole for about 8 minutes, or until tender.

Sauté your onions and garlic until they begin to caramelize. Add your long beans and crispy bacon. Toss with the fresh green onion tops and garnish with the toasted almonds slices.

I like about 10 times the amount of Bacon for this recipe, but I don't advise that :o)

## Long bean salad

4 cups - blanched and shocked long beans (cut then measured)  
2 cups - cherry tomatoes (halved)  
1 cup - toasted pine nuts  
1 cup - parmesan cheese (shaved)  
2 cups - balsamic vinegar  
1 cup - sugar  
1 hand full - fresh basil stems

In a small sauce pot combine the vinegar, sugar and basil stems. Cook on medium heat for about 20 minutes. Cool it and it will be used to drizzle on top of your salad.

Combine the cooked cooled cut beans, Tomatoes, pine nuts and cheese.

Once plated, drizzle the balsamic syrup on top.

Check out our [Newsletter Archive](#) for additional recipes.