

# ***Florida Food Fare***

by Mary King  
Family & Consumer Sciences  
University of Florida / IFAS  
Sarasota County Extension



## **Celery**

**Description:** Celery belongs to the same family of plants as the carrot, parsley, fennel, caraway and anise. The characteristic flavor and odor of this family are due to the presence of volatile oils in the stems and leaves and especially in the seeds. It originated and still grows wild in the Mediterranean region. It is a low bitter herb with not much resemblance to the tender, less fibrous, milder tasting celery that is cultivated in Florida today. Celery production in Florida has decreased over the past few years, but the Everglades area in Palm Beach County remains the most important production area. Until recent years, there were large celery fields in Sarasota, east of I 75.

Most of the celery produced in Florida is a tall Utah type of green (Pascal) celery. This type is characterized by midribs that are thick, fleshy, long, glossy, green and practically stringless. Most celery stalks are field trimmed to a length of about 16 inches. They vary from about 2 to 3 inches in diameter, and have from 10 to 15 branches per stalk. Another type of celery, celeriac, produces an enlarged edible root that is used for its strong celery-like flavor. It is grown in Florida only to a limited extent.

**Availability:** Celery from Florida is marketed 10 months of the year, with volume harvesting beginning in November, peaking in January through April and ending in June. The Everglades area of Palm Beach County leads the state in celery production. Celery is available in the grocery store year round.

**Nutritional Value:** Celery has a very low calorie content. One stalk, approximately 8 inches long has only 5 calories. It has 100 IU Vitamin A, the greener branches containing more than the lighter colored ones. Celery is also valuable for adding fiber to the diet. It is about 94% water, contains a trace of

protein, 16 mg calcium, 4mg vitamin C, 2 g carbohydrate, approximately 50 mg sodium, and a trace of fat.

**Selection and Care:** When buying celery, look for a crisp firm stalk with fresh leaves and tender branches that snap easily. Choose stalks that are light or medium green with a shiny surface. Avoid wilted celery with branches that are cracked or bruised or those with yellow and brown leaves. If branches are rough or puffy, celery is likely to be dry and pithy. Celery will keep longer if the branches are not separated from the root before storing. Wash entire celery stalk thoroughly. Place stalk in plastic bag in the refrigerator. Raw celery can be stored for about 2 weeks.

**Use and Preparation:** The entire stalk can be used, making it a very economical vegetable. It makes a wonderful low fat snack, appetizer or salad ingredient. Celery also adds variety and flavor to soups, main dishes and side dishes. It can be served raw, boiled, stir fried, or baked in a casserole. The leaves may be used fresh or dried and used later on for seasoning. Celery can be preserved at home by freezing, canning or pickling.

### **Recipes:**

#### **Celery Relish**

1 quart chopped celery	3/4 cup liquid drained from cooked
1 teaspoon salt	celery and onions
1 cup white onions chopped	2 large chopped red peppers
3/4 cup white vinegar	2 large chopped green peppers
1 tablespoon salt	1 teaspoon dry mustard
1/2 cup sugar	

Prepare chopped celery and onions and cook in boiling salted water for 15 minutes, drain. Combine celery, onions, and chopped peppers, add vinegar, 3/4 cup liquid from cooking celery and onion, sugar and mustard. Cook slowly for 30 minutes. Pack into hot pint jars, leaving 1/2 inch headspace. Wipe jar mouths and adjust lids. Process in boiling bath canner 10 minutes.

#### **Celery and Apple Salad**

1 cup diced celery	1 large apple, chopped
1 cup shredded cabbage	1 cup low fat mayonnaise
1/4 cup green pepper, chopped	Dash of salt

Mix all ingredients well. Refrigerate.

### **Celery Chowder**

3 tablespoons butter	3 tablespoons flour
1 large diced onion	1 quart low fat milk
2 large potatoes diced	1/2 teaspoon salt
1 quart finely diced celery	Black or white pepper
1 bay leaf	Garnish: 2 hard-boiled eggs chopped

Melt butter, add onion. Cook until tender. In separate pan, cover potatoes, celery and bay leaf with boiling water. Cook until tender. Add flour to pan with butter and onions, stir. Add milk, salt and pepper; heat until it starts to thicken. Add potatoes and some of the water to get the consistency you want. Garnish just before serving, with chopped eggs. Makes 6 servings.

### **Chicken Salad**

1/4 cup mayonnaise	1/8 teaspoon pepper
1 1/2 teaspoons lemon juice	1 1/2 cups cut up cooked chicken breast
1 tablespoon low fat milk	1 1/2 cups seedless grapes cut in half
1/4 teaspoon dry mustard	1/2 cup chopped celery
1/2 teaspoon salt	Garnish: parsley

In medium bowl, stir first 6 ingredients. Add chicken, grapes and celery. Mix well, sprinkle with parsley. Makes a delicious luncheon salad. Serves 2.