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Grilled mozzarella and spinach BLT,
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INGREDIENT

Discover halloumi, a cheese you can grill

Halloumi, from Cyprus, has a lot going for it. This cheese has a great chewy texture and a mellow yet briny flavor that hints of mint. Though halloumi is perfectly tasty when eaten fresh with bread and fruit and vegetables like watermelon, figs, cucumbers, tomatoes, or olives, the coolest thing about halloumi is that, when heated, it softens but doesn't melt, so you can grill it, pan-fry it, or pop it under the broiler. Cooked halloumi gets a tasty brown crust and a soft, gooey center. You'll find a recipe that pairs pan-fried halloumi with a fennel compote on p. 25.

A marinade makes halloumi even better. Soak sliced halloumi in olive oil, lemon juice, red pepper flakes, chopped garlic, and fresh oregano for several hours, then eat it right out of the marinade or throw it on the grill—it's delicious in a BLT or tucked into a pita with a slab of ripe tomato and a drizzle of the marinade. For grilling, slices that are about 1/2 inch thick work best.

If halloumi is too salty for your taste, simmer it in water for about 5 minutes. This also softens the cheese, so if you intend to grill it, chill it until firm.

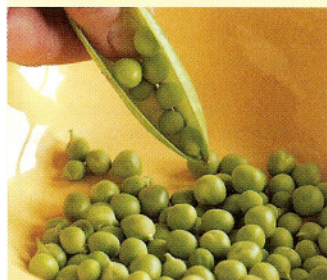
Look for halloumi in the cheese section of your local market, or see p. 119 for a mail-order source. Halloumi keeps well in the refrigerator and can also be frozen.



TIP

Make broth from pea pods

Don't throw those pods away—make broth. After you've shelled all those peas, save the empty pods for making a simple pea broth, which you can use to enhance the flavor of soups, stews, and braises.



To make the broth, put the pods in a large pot and cover with water by at least 1 inch. Add a pinch of salt and a roughly chopped onion. Simmer for about 25 minutes, strain, and discard the pods. The broth will keep for 2 days in the refrigerator and for about 1 month in the freezer.



INGREDIENT

Crisp jícama for salads or snacks

Jícama (pronounced HEE-kah-mah) is a tuber that looks like a squashed softball with rough, papery brown skin. It has crisp juicy flesh, kind of like a very crunchy, unsweet apple. Look in the fresh produce department of your grocery store for a jícama that feels solid and heavy, not soft or shriveled. Cut the jícama in half with a large knife and then peel off the skin and about 1/8 inch of the more fibrous flesh below

the skin with a paring knife. If you'll be using the whole jícama, you can also peel it like you would a melon. Once it's peeled, it's very easy to slice and dice. In addition to using it in the salad on p. 90, try slicing jícama into sticks and sprinkling them with lime juice, chili powder, and salt for a refreshing snack. Jícama doesn't need refrigeration until it's been peeled or cut.