

Sugarloaf – Radicchio Milanese – Pan di zucchero

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Ideas for preparing it, without quantities

What strange names for an underrated winter vegetable. Sugarloaf chicory is also called autumn chicory and is – like the red radicchio – a variety of chicory. It descends from the wild chicory – the « weed » with the wonderfully mysterious blue flowers.

In September Christian planted sugarloaf chicory in our garden for the first time. Now it is ready to harvest. What to do with it?

The antipasto or vegetarian secondo

Cut the outer, strongly green leaves into wide strips, boil them for 5 minutes in salted water, uncovered, and at the end add a handful of frozen chickpeas. Drain them and leave them to drain.

Warm a chopped garlic clove and olive oil in a wide pan, add the chicory and the chickpeas, season with salt and peperoncino and steam briefly. Do not cover it, so that it keeps its green colour.

It tastes excellent as an antipasto, seasoned at the table if you like with a few drops of the best aceto balsamico. Just as good simply drizzled with olive oil. But of course crisp little cubes of bacon or bread go well with it too.

With polenta or potatoes as a side dish it becomes a vegetarian main course.

The salad

The inner part of the sugarloaf is eaten raw as a salad. Cut into fine strips, enriched with diced apple and walnuts. Or whatever you feel like at the moment of cooking! A few chopped capers and black olives, for example, make the salad something special.