

GREEN AND YELLOW BEANS WITH OLIVE-SHALLOT BUTTER

10 Kalamata olives, pitted and chopped

1 shallot, chopped

1 clove garlic, chopped

2 tablespoons unsalted butter, at room temperature

5–6 fresh basil leaves (optional)

½ lb (250 g) yellow wax beans, trimmed (see Note)

½ lb (250 g) green beans, such as haricots verts or Blue Lake, trimmed

Salt and freshly ground pepper

In a food processor, combine the olives, shallot, garlic, butter, and basil, if using, and process to mix well. Set aside.

Cook the yellow and green beans separately, as they cook in different amounts of time. Bring a saucepan three-fourths full of salted water to a rapid boil over high heat. Add the yellow beans and boil until tender-crisp, 5–6 minutes, or slightly longer depending on the tenderness and age of the beans. Scoop out the beans with a strainer, drain well, and plunge them into a bowl of ice-cold water. Leave them to cool while you cook the green beans.

Cook the green beans in the same pot of water in the same way, but decrease the cooking time to 3–5 minutes. When tender-crisp, drain and plunge the beans into ice-cold water until cool.

In a wide frying pan or sauté pan, warm 2 tablespoons water over medium heat. Drain the yellow and green beans and add them to the pan. Toss together until heated through. Add the olive butter and toss with the beans until the butter coats the beans but has not melted into a puddle. Taste and adjust the seasoning with salt and pepper, adding salt only if necessary, as the olives are already salty. Transfer to a serving platter and serve at once.

Note: To trim pod beans, snap off the stem ends and remove any strings along the length of the beans. The tail ends may be left intact.

Variation Tip: This recipe can also become a sauce for a pasta side dish. Cut the green and yellow beans into manageable lengths (about 2 inches/5 cm) before boiling, and double the amount of olive butter. Cook 10 oz (315 g) short macaroni, drain, and toss with the butter-coated beans. Garnish with finely shredded fresh basil. Thai basil is especially fragrant and delicious with the olive butter.

MAKES 4 SERVINGS



POD BEAN VARIETIES

Unlike shell beans, such as favas and limas, whose pods are discarded, green beans and yellow wax beans are both pod beans, that is, beans that are eaten whole, pod and seeds together. Haricots verts, also called filet beans, are slim, dark green French green beans with a delicate flavor and tender texture. The Blue Lake, a stockier pod, is also a good choice. Yellow wax beans are similar to green beans except in color. Look for fresh, crisp beans that make an audible snapping sound when broken.