

Cooking Greens

A bunch of cooking greens is strikingly distinct from a bag of salad. Most cooking greens are big. Kale and chard leaves, for example, might grow to be longer than your forearm. A side dish of greens always rounds out a meal, and, in main dishes, a few tender ribbons of greens curled among vegetables enhances a meal.

HANDLING

Just prior to use, swish leaves in a large basin of luke-warm water until grit settles to the bottom. It's fine to leave the stems on small baby greens, but many greens (choi, chard, collards, kale) have thick stems that cook more slowly than the leaves. Fold each leaf in half and slice out the stem. To use the stems in your dish, slice them 1/4 inch long and begin cooking them before you add the greens.

Kale and Walnut Pesto

This version of pesto is particularly good over roasted potatoes, but it works great over pasta, too. If you plan to freeze it, add the cheese only after the pesto has thawed, when you are ready to serve. *Shareholder* (adapted from the *Seed Savers Calendar*, 1998). Makes about 1 cup

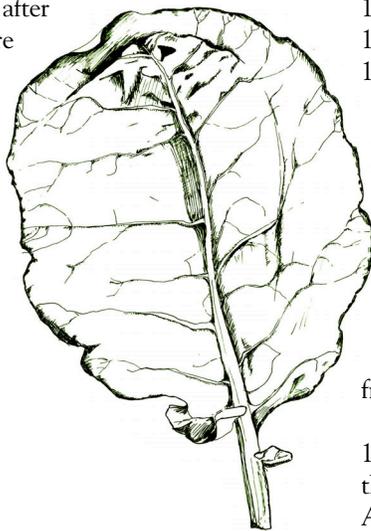
1/4 cup chopped walnuts
1 tablespoon plus
1/2 teaspoon salt, divided
1/2 pound kale, coarsely chopped
2 cloves garlic, minced
(about 1 teaspoon)
1/2 cup extra virgin olive oil
1/2 cup freshly grated Parmesan
cheese (about 1 1/2 ounces)
freshly ground black pepper

1. Toast the chopped walnuts in a dry, heavy skillet (preferably cast iron) over high heat, stirring constantly, until they start to brown in spots and become fragrant. (Be careful not to over-toast them, as they will burn very quickly once they are toasted.) Immediately transfer the walnuts to a dish to cool.

2. Bring two quarts of water to a boil. Add 1 tablespoon salt, then add the kale. Cook kale until tender, about 10 minutes. Drain.

3. Put the garlic, walnuts, and kale in a blender or food processor; pulse until well combined. With the blender or food processor running, pour in the olive oil in a steady, smooth, pencil-thin stream.

4. When the ingredients are thoroughly combined, transfer to a bowl. Stir in the Parmesan, remaining 1/2 teaspoon salt, and pepper. Serve hot.



STORAGE

Cut beet and turnip greens from their roots; store roots separately. Keep dry, unwashed greens in a sealed plastic bag in the refrigerator. Thicker greens will keep for up to two weeks, but tender ones like spinach and beet greens should be eaten within a week.

Kale and White Bean Soup with Sun-dried Tomatoes and Saffron

Sun-dried tomatoes lend their deep, sweet flavor to this wonderful and easy-to-prepare soup, and fennel seeds and saffron add a little mystery. A shareholder recipe-tester informed us that this is a wonderful spring or fall soup, and the crew just loved gobbling down the tasty results. *Shareholder* (adapted from *The Moosewood Restaurant Kitchen Garden*).

Serves 4 to 6

3 tablespoons olive oil
2 cloves garlic, minced or pressed (about 1 teaspoon)
1/2 teaspoon ground fennel seeds
1 1/2 cups chopped onion (about 3 small onions)
1 medium potato, diced into 1/2-inch pieces
1 small carrot, chopped
1 small parsnip, chopped
1 1/2 cups peeled, chopped fresh tomatoes or canned tomatoes
6 cups vegetable or chicken stock
2 bay leaves
1 tablespoon chopped fresh oregano or 1 teaspoon dried oregano
6–7 large leaves kale, chopped (3 to 4 cups)
3/4 cup cooked or canned (rinsed, drained) white beans
1/2 cup chopped oil-packed sun-dried tomatoes, drained
pinch saffron
salt
freshly ground black pepper

1. Heat the olive oil in a large pot over medium-high heat. Add the garlic and fennel seeds; cook, stirring constantly, for 1 minute. Add the onion and cook, stirring constantly, for 2 minutes. Add the potato, carrot, and parsnip and cook, stirring constantly, for 5 minutes more.

2. Add the fresh or canned tomatoes. Pour in the stock. Stir in the bay leaves and oregano. Bring the mixture to a boil, then immediately reduce the heat so that it continues at a simmer.

3. Add the kale, beans, and sun-dried tomatoes. Simmer until the vegetables are just tender, 15 to 20 minutes. Remove the pot from the heat; add the saffron. Season with salt and pepper to taste.

Overheard

I hate when people reduce spinach to a bunch of vitamins and minerals. Spinach has a life. Spinach has a personality. Doesn't that matter?

Excerpted from *Farmer John's Cookbook: The Real Dirt On Vegetables: Seasonal Recipes and Stories from a Community Supported Farm* by Farmer John Peterson & Angelic Organics (Gibbs Smith Publisher). Check with your local farm or bookstore for availability. Additional recipes, charts, individual copies of this book, and quantity discounts available at www.AngelicOrganics.com/cookbook.



Cooking Greens

Supplement

Spinach or Tetragonia and Coconut Banana Curry

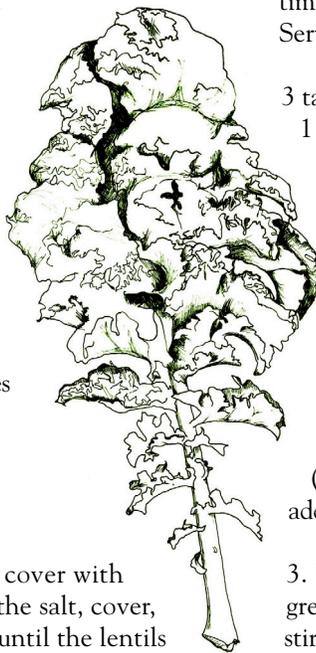
The pairing of banana and spinach in the same recipe may seem peculiar at first, but the ingredients in this dip are the disparate ingredients of a sweet curry dish—and while their texture may become homogenized, their flavors don't. Serve this dip with raw or slightly blanched vegetables, crackers, or chips, or with rice for a delightful side dish. To prepare the curry faster, you can use a 6-ounce can of green lentils (drained) instead of dried lentils. *Friend of the Farm*. Makes about 2 cups

- 1/2 cup dried green lentils
- 1 1/2 teaspoons salt
- 3/4 pound spinach leaves, trimmed, chopped (about 2 cups)
- 2 small ripe bananas, broken into chunks (about 1 cup)
- 1 cup canned coconut milk
- 6 ounces cream cheese, softened
- 2 eggs, hard-cooked
- 1 small or medium red onion, cut into wedges
- 1 clove garlic, peeled
- 2 tablespoons butter, softened
- 1 tablespoon curry powder
- 1 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper

1. Put the lentils in a medium skillet and cover with water. Bring to a boil over high heat, add the salt, cover, and reduce heat. Cook at a steady simmer until the lentils are soft, about 45 minutes. Add more water if it starts to dry up. Drain.
2. Combine the cooked lentils with the remaining ingredients in a food processor and purée until smooth.
3. Transfer the mixture to a bowl; cover and refrigerate for at least 1 hour. Serve cold or at room temperature.

Overheard

Customer at a Chinese Restaurant: I went to a health food restaurant. That's a place where they serve food that's good for you, all natural. I had alfalfa sprouts and avocado on my sandwich. Avocado is green and kind of gooey and creamy. It's high in fat, but the things at this health food restaurant weren't necessarily low in fat. They were just good for you. They made a spinach lasagna that was so delicious. It tasted like it had meat in it.



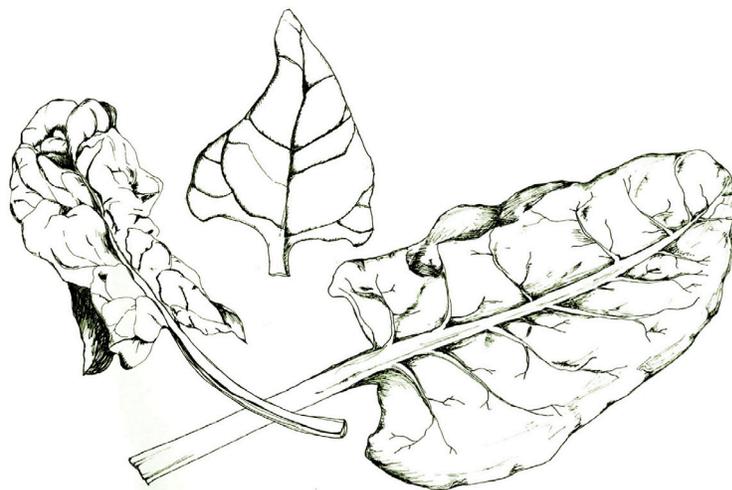
Simple Cooked Greens

Cooking greens in oil or butter over high heat until they are just wilted is a great way to give them an added richness while preserving their fresh taste and delicate texture. Wilted greens mix well with almost anything. They add sophistication to cooked grain or pasta. Topped with grated cheese, a cream sauce, or toasted nuts, they make a complete side dish; dressed with a vinaigrette they become a delicious warm salad. Wilted greens also make a great bed for any meat. They are also wonderful served on their own, simple and elegant, as in this recipe. If you are using greens with hearty stems, such as Swiss chard, cut out the stems, chop them, and sauté them before cooking the leaves to give them enough time to cook. *Angelic Organics Kitchen*.

Serves 4

- 3 tablespoons butter or olive oil
- 1 teaspoon minced garlic (about 2 medium cloves) (optional)
- 1 pound greens, rinsed, torn or chopped into bite-size pieces
- salt
- freshly ground black pepper
- extra virgin olive oil

1. Heat the butter or olive oil in a large skillet or pot over medium heat. Add the garlic; sauté for 1 minute.
2. Add the greens immediately after rinsing them, with the water still clinging to the leaves. Cover; cook for 1 minute. (If you are using heartier greens, such as kale or collard greens, add a cup of water to the skillet. Cover; cook for 5 minutes.)
3. Uncover the skillet, add salt to taste (this will ensure the greens stay a bright green), and give the greens a good flip and stir. Cover the skillet again and continue cooking the greens until they are bright green, tender, and wilted to your taste. (For spinach this will be only another minute or two, for Swiss chard 3 to 5 minutes, and for kale or collard greens, depending on their maturity, this could be up to 20 minutes. Be sure to add more water if it boils away.) Season with pepper and olive oil to taste.



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