

AJO COMMUNITY SUPPORTED AGRICULTURE



Winter 2009-10 / Week 3 of 11

❖ HAPPY HOLIDAYS ❖

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Planned harvest: Purple-top Turnips, Collard Greens, Carrots, Beets, Acorn Squash, Citrus, Radishes and Purple Bok Choi.

Collard greens are various loose-leaved cultivars of *Brassica oleracea* (Acephala Group), the same species that produces cabbage and broccoli. The plant is grown for its large, dark-colored, smooth, paddle-shaped leaves and as a garden ornamental, mainly in Brazil, Portugal, the Southern United States, many parts of Africa, Montenegro, Spain and Kashmir. Collard greens date back to prehistoric times, and are one of the oldest members of the cabbage family. The ancient Greeks grew kale and collards, although they made no distinction between them. Well before the Christian era, the Romans grew several kinds including those with large leaves and stalks and a mild flavor; broad-leaved forms like collards; and others with curled leaves. The Romans may have taken the coles to Britain and France or the Celts may have introduced them to these countries. They reached into the British Isles in the 4th century BC. According to the book *The Backcountry Housewife - A Study of Eighteenth-Century Foods* by Kay Moss and Kathryn Hoffman: The 17th century Lowland Scots had greens or potherbs "from the yard" along with their oat cakes or oatmeal. The switch to corn cakes or mush along with their greens in 18th century American was most likely not too difficult a transition for these folk. John Lawson remarked on the many green herbs, wild and cultivated, growing in Carolina in the early 1700s. These greens included lamb's quarters, plantain, nettles, rhubarb (dock rather than garden rhubarb), comfrey among "*abundance more than I could name.*" The "*abundance*" most likely adds dandelion, sorrel, spinach, cabbage, lettuce, endive, cresses, and purslane to the list.

The Southern style of cooking of greens came with the arrival of African slaves to the southern colonies and the need to satisfy their hunger and provide food for their families. Though greens did not originate in Africa, the habit of eating greens that have been cooked down into a low gravy, and drinking the juices from the greens (known as "*pot likker*") is of African origin. The slaves of the plantations were given the leftover food from the plantation kitchen. Some of this food consisted of the tops of turnips and other greens. Ham hocks and pig's feet were also given to the slaves. Forced to create meals from these leftovers, they created the famous southern greens. The slave diet began to evolve and spread when slaves entered the plantation houses as cooks. Their African dishes, using the foods available in the region they lived in, began to evolve into present-day Southern cooking.

Widely considered to be healthy foods, collards are good sources of vitamin C and soluble fiber and contain multiple nutrients with potent anti-cancer properties, such as diindolylmethane and sulforaphane. Roughly $\frac{1}{4}$ pound (approx. 100 g) of cooked collards contains 46 calories. Some sources even say they contain as much calcium as milk.

Collards are often prepared with other similar green leaf vegetables, such as kale, turnip greens, spinach, and mustard greens in "mixed greens". Mind you that the thick stems will require longer cooking than the leaves. Typical Southern seasonings when cooking collards can consist of smoked and salted meats (ham hocks, pork neckbones, fatback or other fatty meat), diced onions, vinegar, salt, and pepper (black, white, or crushed red). The traditional way to cook greens is to boil or simmer slowly with a piece of salt pork or ham hock for a long time (this tempers their tough texture and smoothes out their bitter flavor) until they are very soft. In spite of what some consider their unpleasant smell, reaction to the smell of cooking greens separates true southern eaters from wannabes.

Traditionally, collards are eaten on New Year's Day, along with black-eyed peas or field peas and cornbread, to ensure wealth in the coming year, as the leaves resemble folding money. Cornbread is used to soak up the "*pot liquor*", a nutrient-rich collard broth.

In Portuguese and Brazilian cuisine, collard greens (or *couve*) are common accompaniments of fish and meat dishes. They are a standard side dish for feijoada, a popular pork and beans-style stew. The leaves are sliced into strips, 1 to 3 mm wide (sometimes by the grocer or market vendor, with a special hand-cranked slicer) and sautéed with oil or butter, flavored with garlic, onion, and salt. Sometimes, it is also eaten fresh. Thinly sliced collard greens are also the main ingredient of a popular soup, *caldo verde* ("green broth") (see the recipe on page 2).

(Sources: Wikipedia, Farmer John's Cookbook, Soupsong.com)

Farm Break: The last two weeks in the year are the only time in the year when Crooked Sky Farm closes their doors. So please note that there is no pick up on Saturday, Dec. 26 or Saturday, Jan. 2, and that the next pick up will be held on January 9. We wish you very peaceful holidays and a fortune-filled New Year, and thank you all for being part of this awesome project!

RECIPES ETC.

Baby Carrots with Wine and Sage

(by Andrea Galyean)

A simple, lovely finger food. A mix of carrot colors is especially nice.

1 cup water

½ cup dry white wine

About 18 fresh sage leaves, 12 whole, plus 6 thinly sliced
1 pound baby carrots, about 2 to 3 inches long, washed and trimmed but retaining their peels and at least ½ inch of stem to use as a handle.

1 tablespoon melted sweet butter or good olive oil (try this with Queen Creek Olive Mill's Blood Orange Olive Oil)

Kosher salt to taste

Combine water, wine, and 12 whole sage leaves in the bottom of a steamer pan, place baby carrots in the steamer basket and bring to a boil. Lower heat slightly and steam until carrots are just tender. Remove carrots, rinse quickly in cold water to stop cooking and then toss them with olive oil and sprinkle with salt. Continue to simmer wine sauce until it is reduced to less than 1/3 cup. Arrange carrots on a serving platter, drizzle with the wine sauce and garnish with sliced sage leaves. Serve warm or at room temperature.

Sarah's Vegan or Not Butternut Squash Soup

(submitted by Sarah Howard)

2 Tbsp olive oil (non-vegan version, sub. butter)

1 small onion, chopped

2 cup vegetable (non-vegan sub. chicken) broth

1 lb butternut squash, peeled, seeded, and cut into 1-inch cubes

2 medium sliced pears (sub. sliced apples)

1 tbsp. chopped fresh rosemary (sub. 1 tbsp dried, chopped)

1 tsp minced fresh ginger root

1/4 tsp sea salt

1/4 tsp ground white pepper

1/4 tsp ground coriander

1/4 tsp cinnamon

1 c. soy or almond milk (non-vegan version, sub. dairy milk)

1/2 cup chopped pecans or walnuts for garnish

Heat olive oil over medium heat in large stockpot and cook onion until tender. Stir in broth, rosemary, ginger, squash, pears, and remaining spices. Heat to boiling, then reduce heat; cover and simmer 10-15 min or until squash is tender. Meanwhile, heat a dry pan over high heat, add pecans and stir constantly 1-2 min until fragrant, being careful not to burn them, and immediately transfer them from pan to a bowl. Puree soup in batches in food processor or blender (you may need to let soup cool a bit first). Return puree to pot and stir in soy milk. Reheat, stirring frequently until hot (do not boil). Top with toasted nuts and enjoy. If you reheat this the next day, you may need to thin with more soy milk or water to desired consistency.

Caldo Verde (Green Broth)

(adapted from Soupsong.com)

This is a Portugese poor peasants' soup with all the ingredients coming from the kitchen garden, and there are as many recipes as there are cooks. The general idea is to combine a light broth with potatoes with thinly sliced leaves of collards and/or kale, scalped briefly till brilliant green, and added to the broth in big quantities to give the soup the body, along with some olive oil and/or Portuguese or other type of pork sausage, preferably spiced with paprika.

1 onion, minced fine

1 garlic clove, minced

4 Tbsp olive oil

6 Red LaSoda potatoes, peeled and sliced thin

2 quarts cold water

6 oz. dry, garlicky sausage (linguica, chorizo, even pepperoni), sliced paper thin

2½ tsp salt

1 lb. collards, kale, or turnip greens, washed, trimmed, rolled up and sliced into extra fine shreds (in a pinch, slightly defrost frozen kale and finely shred it with a sharp knife)

In a large saucepan, sauté the onion and garlic in 3 Tbsp of oil for about 3 minutes. Add the potatoes and sauté, stirring constantly, for 2-3 minutes. Add water, cover, and boil gently over medium heat for 20 minutes, until the potatoes are mushy. Meanwhile, fry the sausage in a skillet over low heat for about 10 minutes, until most of the fat has drained out. Drain well and reserve. When the potatoes are soft, remove from the heat and either mash them in the pan with a masher or puree them, then add the sausage, salt, and pepper. Return to medium heat, cover, and simmer for 5 more minutes. When ready to serve, add the shreds of greens and simmer uncovered for about 5 minutes, until they are tender and the color of jade. Mix in the last Tbsp of oil, taste for seasoning, and ladle into large flat soup plates.

Whipped Turnip Puff

(submitted by Fran Driver, adapted from the *Better Homes and Gardens New Cookbook*)

1 lb. turnips, peeled and cut (3 cups)

¼ cup chopped onions

2 Tbsp butter

1 Tbsp sugar

½ tsp salt

Dash pepper

¾ cup soft breadcrumbs (1 slice)

2 eggs

Boil turnips and onions until tender. Drain. Add butter, sugar, salt, and pepper; beat well with electric mixer or mash with a potato masher. Add breadcrumbs and eggs; beat well. Turn into a lightly greased 1-quart casserole dish. Bake uncovered at 375 °F for 35 to 40 minutes.

❖ HAVE A PEACEFUL AND JOYOUS HOLIDAY AND A HAPPY NEW YEAR ❖