August 18, 2012

Featured Herb: **Featured Vegetables**

**Egyptian Walking Onions**

"The Greens", Chard, Kale, Beet, Spinach, Collards

**Egyptian Walking Onions** are not really an herb, but I couldn’t resist featuring them, because they add so much flavor and they are so completely “wholistic”...meaning, you can literally eat the whole plant. They have many names, but no one is really sure why the “Egyptian” part of the name exists, personally I think it’s because they walk sideways, when reproducing, and most Egyptian drawings illustrate that, but it’s just a guess. Egyptian Walking Onions are a bit more “zippy” and spicy than regular onions. You can eat the bulb, you can chop up the green stems like scallions or chives, but be careful because they are a little hotter than chives or scallions. The best part is you can use the “flowerets” and eventually the “bulbets”. The bulbets are how the plant reproduces, the bulbets grow, the stem bends (or walks) to a new location and releases the bulbs, hence the “walking”. They can be quite prolific.

**Egyptian Spiced and Pickled Egyptian bulbets or onions**

- 1 cup bulbets of Egyptian Walking Onions
- 1/2 c water
- 1/2 tsp cumin seed
- 3 whole cloves
- 1/4 tsp anise seed (or fennel seed)
- 1 green cardamom pod
- 1/2 c vinegar, (try cider or red wine too)
- 1/4 c sugar
- 1/2 tsp coriander seed
- 1 small cinnamon stick broken into pieces
- 1/4 tsp caraway seed
- 1 small red chili pepper

In a saucepan of boiling salted water, cook the onions for 4 to 6 minutes or until just tender. Drain and rinse with very cold water or submerge in ice water; drain again. Place the onions and chili pepper in a glass jar or plastic container. In another small saucepan bring the water and vinegar to a boil. Add the sugar, coriander, cumin, cloves, cinnamon, anise, caraway seed and green cardamom pod. Simmer until the sugar dissolves. Pour the hot liquid over the onions and leave to cool; refrigerate for at least 1 hour. Let marinate at least 3 days before using. Before serving, drain the liquid and save to reuse for another batch of onions. Make sure when reusing the liquid to re-heat before adding the next batch of onions.
This pickled onion recipe can be used on the onion bulbs as well, but the quantities of other ingredients will need to be portioned up. (Example, 1 cup of bulbets, would equal 2 cups of onions, so double the recipe). I thought the pickled onions would be great for a martini and if you really want to be adventurous, use the spice mixture in a bit of vodka and let it steep for several weeks, drain, and then make the martini. But, the pickled onions do well in salads, relish trays. It’s just something fun and different.

**Egyptian Walking Onion Soup.** I used the whole plant for this soup.

1 1/2 lb onion, about 5 cups
6 c beef stock or other stock if desired
Salt and pepper

1/8 c butter and 1/8 c olive oil
1 tsp fresh thyme
grated parmesan, or gruyere if desired

Slice bulbs thinly horizontally. Cut green stems into 1/4 inch pieces. If bulbets are more than an inch in length, cut in half, otherwise leave them whole. In large saucepan, or small stockpot, heat oil and butter. Slowly cook onions, allowing them to caramelize slightly. Add stock and simmer, covered for 20 minutes. Add thyme, salt and pepper and cook 10 minutes more. To serve, add cheese. Makes about 4-6 servings.

A word about greens... Chard is an excellent source of Vitamin A and Vitamin C. Spinach is an even better source of Vitamin A and C, has some Calcium and Iron content, maybe that’s why Popeye ate it! Beet greens are about the same as Spinach. Collard greens are a good source again of Vitamin A, a better source of Vitamin C and Calcium. But Kale is the best source of Vitamin A and C, Calcium and Iron and has 2 g of Protein to boot! (All this information is for the Raw greens, the vitamin source will decrease depending on how it is cooked. Source: Nutrition Data).

**Kale, Apple, and smoked salmon Salad**

1/3 cup extra virgin olive oil
8 ounces of smoked salmon, broken up
1/4 cup pure maple syrup
8 oz. bunch kale, stems discarded, leaves shredded
3/4 cup pecans, toasted if desired

4 ounces sliced bacon, diced
1/4 cup balsamic vinegar
1/4 teaspoon salt & black pepper, each
2 apples, sliced into thick matchsticks
1/2 cup bladderwrack, dried (optional)

Combine the olive oil and bacon in a small saucepan over medium heat. Cook, stirring frequently, until bacon is golden and crispy. Strain the pan drippings into a small bowl and leave the crispy bacon off to the side to cool.

Add the balsamic vinegar, maple syrup, salt and pepper and whisk well. Combine the radicchio, kale, salmon, apples and pecans in a large bowl. Toss while adding the dressing, little by little, until salad is well dressed. Taste and adjust seasoning with salt and pepper. Garnish with crispy bacon and dried bladderwrack.
**Lentil soup with Chard and tomato basil coulis**

3/4 cup Lentils  
1/4 onion, chopped  
2 small carrots, chopped  
1 bay leaf  
2 1/2 cup stock  
1 small stalk celery, chopped  
3 small stalks and leaves of chard

Using a small stock pot or saucepan, heat 2 Tbsp olive oil over high heat. Sauté garlic, onion, carrot and celery until translucent. Add Lentils, bay leaf, stock and salt to taste. Bring to a simmer and the turn down the heat and cook for about 20-25 minutes, until lentils are a bit chewy, but not mushy. In the meantime make the tomato coulis (recipe follows). When the 20 minutes are up, add the chard and cook about 5-8 more minutes or until done. Check seasoning, adding more salt or pepper if needed. Serves 4. (If not using the coulis recipe below, add 2 Tbsp of Balsamic vinegar or Cider vinegar to soup before serving. It will “brighten” the taste of the soup!)

**Tomato basil or mint coulis**

1 pint cherry tomatoes (preferably red and yellow)  
2 garlic cloves, minced  
8 basil leaves, or 6 mint leaves, chopped fine  
1/4 c Balsamic vinegar  
1/8 c extra virgin olive oil

Slice tomatoes in halves or quarters, place in deep bowl, add garlic, basil, Balsamic vinegar and oil. Toss and let marinate at room temp 1 or more hours or overnight in refrigerator. Serve in soup, salads or by itself!

This next recipe is a bit fun, and it’s not an original, but it’s close to what I already do sometimes. When I make a smoothie, I use pineapple, bananas and blueberries for fruit. Then as an added bonus I will add spinach or even chard. It will turn an interesting color... but when I drink it, I actually feel healthier afterwards. This recipe takes that idea one step further, and makes popsicles. It is from the Delicious Living magazine, and is so close to my own recipe, without the blueberries.

**Green Monster Pops**

1 c spinach  
3 bananas  
1 1/2-to-2 c water (they recommend purified)

Chop Kale leaves and combine all ingredients in a blender; puree and add water. Puree a second time. Pour into pop molds, (or ice cube trays) and add pop sticks. Freeze. Per serving, 78 calories, 0 mg cholesterol, 1 g protein, 20 g carbohydrates, 2 g fiber 4 mg sodium.

Since potatoes are beginning to be available locally, I thought I would share a fun way to create with both potatoes and greens. This recipe makes 4 large cakes, enough for 2 people, or you could serve them as appetizers. The recipe increases well and is fairly easy.
Potato cakes with Mixed Greens

7 oz fresh chard, beet greens, and kale (use leaves with thin stalks)  2 tsp lemon juice
5 oz of cream cheese  2 1/2 c cooked, mashed potatoes
1 T flour  Cornmeal
olive oil  Salt and pepper

Wash the greens thoroughly, then steam until stalks are tender. Drain well. Coarsely chop the greens leaving some of the larger types of leaves for garnish later. Cut the cheese into small pieces and mix with the mashed potatoes. Season well with salt and pepper, then stir in flour, and chopped greens. Divide the mixture into fourths or use a small scoop to spoon out a portion size if using for appetizers. Slightly shape into a patty and coat patty with cornmeal on plate.

Heat oil in a frying pan. Set patties into the pan and cook for about 3-4 minutes per side. Set on dish and quickly sauté the reserved greens in the frying pan and then top potato cakes with the greens. Can be garnished with a sorrel oil or other herb oil, by pureeing 10-20 sorrel leaves with olive oil.

Seaweed has been mentioned in a couple of recipes today, for a good reason: it is a local vegetable that we can harvest and need in our diets. It can be easily added to many dishes, lends a natural saltiness to any recipe (be careful to adjust accordingly). It can be “strong” tasting, but if you have an underactive thyroid, it can help!

Gimbal Botanicals dries local Bladderwrack and harvests local Sea Asparagus, this is our featured vendor for this demonstration.

This next recipe is a fun and easy one. It’s great for parties, or just to nibble on. Because we live in such a humid climate, the bladderwrack may need to be toasted before you add it at the last moment. You can omit the bladderwrack if you desire, but I encourage you to try it with. This is based off of an African spice mixture, but it’s not too hot!

Bhone Kaaja, African Spiced Nuts with Bladderwrack and Honey

1 lb mixture of raw nuts and pumpkin seeds  2 tsp ground cumin
1/2 tsp cayenne  1/2 tsp paprika
1/2 tsp ground fennel seeds  Honey
Peanut or Olive oil  15 oz Bladderwrack, toasted slightly

Mix spices. Heat oil in large skillet. Heat oil to 325 degrees. Add nuts and seeds. Stir until light brown, drizzle honey over and cook a few minutes more. Toast Bladderwrack if needed and toss in with nuts. Serve. Can be stored in airtight container 2 weeks, may need to be “toasted” again to dry out Bladderwrack.
Keeping with the “Greens Theme”, this next technique can be done with any fish or vegetables. It is a classic way of French Cooking and it’s very easy. The technique is called “En Papillote” which means forming an envelope of paper or leaf (of some sort) to allow the food to steam in its own juices. Please use only parchment paper, or in a pinch a clean brown paper bag (big enough to fit your fish filet in), and you can always use foil. (Use foil only if you are cooking on top of stove). Don’t use waxed paper! Possible leaves to use range from nasturtium to banana, and everything in-between. It can be a low-fat easy way of cooking and the possibilities are endless, and so healthy. Plus if you make individual packets for each person to open on their own, the effect is wonderful when they cut into the envelope, all the steam with the flavors rushes out; it can be inspiring! Layer food thoughtfully, greens on the bottom, fish next, other heartier vegetables on top, such as squash or asparagus if you choose.

Usually you would bake this in an oven, but today I am changing the technique a bit and cooking it in a sauté pan brushed with oil. As soon as it puffs up I start counting minutes depending on how thick the fish or chicken is. A filet of fish will only need about 4 minutes, chicken will take more time to cook. This recipe is one of the ones I use regularly. Enjoy!

**Fish and Scallops in Papillote with Greens and Sea Asparagus**

1/2 lb sea asparagus, fresh if possible
4- 4 oz fish filets (salmon, rockfish etc)
4 small sprigs of rosemary
4 Tbsp olive oil or butter

3 c greens, beet, chard, kale, collard, medium chopped
8 large sea scallops, cut horizontally in half
1 green stem from Egyptian Walking onion or 2 scallions
lemon wedges (optional)

Heat oven to 450 degrees, or if using foil packets, wait until done making packets to heat a sauté pan. Cut 4 8x10 pieces of parchment paper or foil. Fold in half, then open back up and start layering. Place about 3/4 c of sea asparagus on each of the bottom layers of paper or foil. Layer 3/4 cup of greens next, then some of the onions and then 4 halved sea scallops and 1 of the filets. Finally pull off the leaves of rosemary and sprinkle on top. If using butter, add now 1 Tbsp/packet, if using oil wait until the final fold. Fold over the top portion of foil or paper, and turn edges over, crimping and folding tightly like a pie crust. Repeat with each packet leaving the last hole open to add the olive oil. Hold packet slightly upwards and add olive oil. Finish tightly crimping packet.

If baking, place packets on cookie sheet and bake 8 minutes. If using a sauté pan (make sure packets are foil), Heat sauté pan and coat with olive oil. When hot, add 2 packets or more, depending on how big your frying pan is, and begin to watch packets. When they start puffing up, time for 4 minutes. Remove and set on plates, or in a warm oven of 200 degrees. Do the same process for the remaining packets. Serve and let everyone open their own packet. Serves 4.

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