

Ingredients

- 1 cup medium-coarse or coarse cornmeal, preferably organic stone-ground
- 4 cups water
- 1 tsp. salt; more to taste
- 3 Tbs. olive oil
- 1 clove garlic
- 1/4 tsp. crushed red chile flakes
- Freshly ground black pepper to taste
- 1 lb. mixed tender greens, such as arugula, spinach, watercress, young kale, plus a few sprigs of dill or fennel; thick stems cut away, leaves chopped coarsely
- 1/3 cup grated Pecorino Romano

Directions

1. Heat the oven to 350°F. In an oiled 3-qt. nonstick ovenproof skillet, stir together the cornmeal, water, and salt. Bake uncovered for 40 minutes.
2. Meanwhile, prepare the greens: In a very large skillet, heat the olive oil over medium-high heat. Add the garlic, chile flakes, and a pinch of black pepper; cook for 1 minute. Pour half the oil into a 1-1/2- or 2-qt. baking and serving dish, reserving the garlic in the skillet, and then pour another 1 Tbs. into a cup to be drizzled over the final dish. Brush the seasoned oil all over the inside of the serving dish. Add the chopped greens to the oil and garlic remaining in the skillet, cover, and cook over medium heat, stirring occasionally, until wilted and tender, about 10 minutes. Discard the garlic. Season the greens with salt and pepper. If necessary, uncover the greens and increase the heat at the end to evaporate any liquid. (You'll have 1-1/2 to 2 cups cooked greens.)
3. When the polenta has cooked 40 minutes, quickly stir in the greens and half the cheese until combined. Taste and add salt if needed. Transfer to the oiled ovenproof serving dish, drizzle with the reserved oil, sprinkle with the remaining cheese, and bake until the cheese is melted, another 10 minutes. Serve hot.



Sisters Hill Farm

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Notes from Apprentice John



Summer's green leaves are beginning to turn into autumn's promised colors. The melon harvest is over and the winter squash plants are withering down to reveal plump butternuts, acorns, and pumpkins. Our fall crops are still lush and abundant. The beans, greens, broccoli, kale, cabbage, and chard are growing nicely as I'm sure you've noticed on your walks to the flower patch. Much of our field space, however, is bare these days but this does not reflect a lack of fruitfulness. When you drive into the farm and see the large empty field in front of you remember that what you are seeing is a part of the cycle.

This past Monday Dave seeded cover crops on all of the bare ground at the farm. He planted rye and clover together. Cover crops are important because they prevent soil erosion, improve water infiltration, deter pests and diseases, increase soil organic material, and boost soil nutrients. They protect against soil erosion by quite literally covering the ground and holding it in place, allowing for even heavy rains to infiltrate the soil slowly without washing it away. Cover crops contribute to a better rotation. The idea is to rotate plant families through the fields in order to deter pests and curtail diseases. For example, the brassica family that includes kale, broccoli, and cabbage among others is often eaten by flea beetles. By planting something from a different plant family in the same beds that grew brassicas we can keep the flea beetles at bay. In other words we trick them. If we persisted in planting kale and cabbage in the same exact beds season after season we would have terrible flea beetle damage. For this reason we do not use tillage radishes, a popular winter cover crop, because they are in the brassica family and attract flea beetles. In addition to pest control, cover crops break up disease cycles. Cucurbits, including cucumbers, squash, and melons, are susceptible to fungal diseases that cause the plants to shrivel up and die. We don't want this to happen. Of course all cucurbits eventually curl up and wither, often due to an opportunistic fungus, but we can delay this by rotating our crops and cover cropping certainly helps.

The common combination of rye and clover covers that is just now beginning to germinate has a dual effect on our soil. After supporting so many diverse vegetables that eat up nutrients the soil needs a boost of organic matter and nitrogen. As a grass that grows tall, and if seeded thickly, the rye will generate a

great amount of organic material. It is a hardy grass that survives through the winter and in the spring when cut the material breaks down into the soil. The resulting organic matter provides a home for soil nutrients that next years vegetable crops need. Clover is a legume and as such fixes nitrogen from the air into the soil. We use clover because nitrogen is one of the soil's most important nutrients and vegetables demand a lot of it to grow well. With our thorough seeding of rye and clover you can be sure that next years vegetables will be well equipped to grow strong and produce plenty.

Well, that's enough cover crop writing for this week. I hope you are all enjoying the subtle changes in the weather as much as we are on the farm. The cool mornings are a welcome change from the hot weeks of summer. And soon the trees will reward us with the colors of Fall that reflect the colors of the vegetables we eat – red tomatoes, yellow squash, and orange pumpkins.

******From OrganicGardening.com******

How to Preserve Fresh Herbs in Oil or Butter

At this time of the year I feel I'm in a marathon race to use all the vegetables and freeze or can the left overs. I found what I think is a great idea to reserve the taste of fresh herbs for the winter. Experiment with your favorite herbs for the winter.

1. Wash herbs, discarding stems and damaged leaves. Spin leaves dry in a salad spinner or dry well with paper towels.
2. Place herbs in food processor with 1/3 cup olive oil for every 2 cups leaves, or 1/2 cup unsalted butter (1 stick) per 2 to 4 tablespoons leaves.
3. For butters, add grated citrus rind, ginger, or garlic for extra flavor.
4. To make sure herb oils are adaptable to a wide variety of uses, don't add cheese or nuts.
5. Pulse processor, scraping down sides of bowl from time to time, until you get a chunky paste and all leaves are chopped.
6. To package for freezing, put 1 cup herb oil or 1/2 cup herb butter in a 1 -quart zip-top bag, then flatten and spread mixture to make a thin layer. Freeze flat.
7. Best used within 6 months

******From FineCooking.com******

Tomato & Fresh Green Bean Salad with Crisp Prosciutto

Ingredients

- 6 medium-size ripe red tomatoes, each cut into 6-wedges

- Kosher salt
- 4 thin slices prosciutto (about 2-oz.)
- ½ oz. fresh green beans, trimmed and cut into 2-inch pieces
- 3 Tbs. chopped fresh summer savory, plus fresh sprigs for garnish
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 2 Tbs. sherry vinegar
- ¼ cup extra-virgin olive oil
- Freshly ground black pepper
- 1 ½ cups yellow & orange cherry tomatoes (or other bite-size tomatoes), halved

Directions

1. Heat the oven to 400°F. Put a large pot of salted -water on to boil.
2. Put the tomato wedges in a colander set over a bowl. -Sprinkle with with 1 Tbs. salt, toss, and let stand for 30 min.
3. Slice the prosciutto crosswise into 1/2-inch strips. Arrange on a baking sheet in a single layer and bake until crisp and light golden, about 10 min. Set aside.
4. Meanwhile, when the water comes to a boil, add the beans and cook until tender, 4 to 6 minutes. Drain and let cool.
5. In a small bowl, whisk together the chopped -savory, -garlic, and vinegar. Whisk in the olive oil to blend. Season to taste with salt and pepper.
6. Combine the tomato wedges, cherry tomatoes, and green beans in a bowl. Add the vinaigrette, toss, and season with salt and pepper to taste. Transfer to a shallow serving bowl or platter, sprinkle with the prosciutto, and garnish with the savory sprigs. Serve immediately.

Tat Soi

Tat soi can be used in salads in their raw form or added to stir fries . These small, spoon shaped, and mild flavored leaves can be used much like spinach. Asian greens can be used in the same way.

To Freeze Tomatoes

If you freeze tomatoes for winter use they should be drained before using in soups, braises, stews, and sauces (don't use in sautés or stir fries). To save space in our freezer I cook down extra tomatoes with garlic & onions, put them through the food mill, and freeze. I also add herbs before freezing them.

******From FineCooking.com******

Gratin of Polenta with Greens