

Directions

1. Preheat grill to medium-high.
2. Combine oil, basil, marjoram and salt in a small bowl and reserve 1 tablespoon of the mixture in another small bowl; set aside.
3. Coat both sides of bell pepper, eggplant, zucchini, tomato and onion pieces with cooking spray. Grill the vegetables, turning once, until soft and charred in spots, about 5 minutes per side for the pepper, 4 minutes per side for the eggplant and zucchini and 3 minutes per side for the tomatoes and onion.
4. Rub the tablespoon of reserved herb mixture on both sides of chicken and sprinkle with pepper. Grill the chicken until cooked through and no longer pink in the center, 4 to 5 minutes per side.
5. Meanwhile, transfer the grilled vegetables to a cutting board and chop into 1-inch pieces. Return to the bowl and toss with vinegar and the remaining herb mixture. Serve the grilled chicken with the ratatouille.

***** From *Eatingell.com* *****

Ratatouille - 10 servings, generous 3/4 cup each

Ingredients

- 2 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil, divided
- 2 onions, coarsely chopped
- 2 red and/or yellow bell peppers, seeded and diced
- 4 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 1/2 teaspoons fennel seeds, crushed
- 1 medium eggplant, diced
- 2 large zucchini, diced
- 6 medium ripe tomatoes, coarsely chopped
- 1/4 cup finely chopped fresh basil
- 2 tablespoons finely chopped fresh thyme
- Salt & freshly ground pepper, to taste
- 2 tablespoons finely chopped fresh parsley

Directions

1. Preheat oven to 350°F.
2. Heat 1 tablespoon oil in a Dutch oven over medium heat. Add onions and bell peppers; cook, stirring occasionally, until the vegetables begin to brown, 8 to 10 minutes. Add garlic and fennel seeds; cook, stirring, until fragrant, about 1 minute more. Transfer the vegetables to a large bowl.
3. Add 1 1/2 teaspoons oil to the pot. Add eggplant and cook, stirring frequently, until browned in places, 7 to 8 minutes. Transfer to the bowl with the vegetables.
4. Add the remaining 1 1/2 teaspoons oil to the pot. Add zucchini and cook, stirring frequently, until browned in places, about 5 minutes. Add tomatoes, basil, thyme and the reserved vegetables and bring to a simmer. Cover the pot and transfer to the oven.
5. Bake the ratatouille, stirring occasionally, until the vegetables are tender, 35 to 45 minutes. Season with salt and pepper. Serve hot or at room temperature. Garnish with parsley before serving.



Sisters Hill Farm

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Field notes from our apprentice Katherine Chiu

"We're in the weeds!," my fellow apprentice D. exclaimed, remembering a phrase she and her restaurant colleagues would use during a particularly frenzied day. I recognized the saying, thanks to an old co-worker of mine who had also loved using it around the office whenever it felt like, well, the weeds had hit the fan.

We were crouching, kneeling, and bending to work our way through a couple planted beds that had not been cultivated as early as other beds had been on most other parts of the farm, and the weeds were rapidly encroaching upon our summer squash. Most of them were purslane: that low-spreading, succulent-looking plant that on the one hand, some people, including myself, think tastes pretty great itself, but on the other hand, can VERY rapidly take over a patch of soil and crowd out the crops.

So, out came the purslane, loosened from the soil first with the "sweeps"—arrow-shaped metal cultivators hooked up to the belly of one of our red Cub tractors, and dragged through the soil along both sides of a single row of squash plants. Then we made our way down the beds, pulling the weedy plant matter out of the soil by hand and collecting it into buckets, to be thrown away from the field so it wouldn't reestablish itself right where the sweeps had uprooted it. "Get everything green that you see, okay, guys? We want to aim for 100 percent," Dave instructed as he hopped off the tractor and got down "in the weeds" with us.

I have to note that those weedy beds were nowhere close to the worst weed pressure that any of us apprentices have seen in our experiences working on other farms. But one lesson that Dave has impressed upon us regarding weed control, in addition to the others he recently shared in this newsletter, is the importance of weeding early enough and also aiming for that 100% weed removal when it counts the most. Tiny weeds don't have established roots and will be less likely to re-root themselves after being disturbed. They haven't flowered and produced seed that will increase the weed pressure in our fields later in the season and even years down the road.

And those tiny weeds, relatively fewer in number and physically easier to remove, take so much less time to address than when they are further along in their growth. It is because the farm operates on these principles that we can accomplish the rest of our work so efficiently and effectively. I have appreciated this approach the most at harvest time, when weed-free beds of greens and beans have made for quick cutting and picking—though seeing those previously purslane-crowded squash transformed into pristine, weed-free beds was quite satisfying in itself.

We had several beds of squash growing in another field that we also planned on weeding that day where the weeds were not so far along, and of course, Dave spotted a teachable moment and a way to test and prove the efficiency of his approach. By cultivating and weeding these other beds of squash earlier when the weed pressure was lower, how much time would we save ourselves? We kept track of our time to compare the two tasks. Two weedier beds of squash, tractor cultivated and weeds removed from the field by hand: about an hour with the four of us. 16 beds of squash where the weeds were at an earlier stage of growth, using tractor cultivation and hand tools to disturb the tiny weeds: about three hours, with Dave spending most of that time on another tractor preparing another field for planting! Lesson learned.

I once heard this definition of a weed that I find helpful to repeat to myself: A weed is a plant in a place where people don't want it to be. I think it's just about as good a definition as any, though of course some weeds are more of a thorn in our side than others. Purslane is among them, as well as quickweed, a taller, leafy branched plant with miniscule white flowers with yellow centers. Those of you who came to our garlic harvest party and made it to the back of the garlic beds saw a good amount of these two weeds. (Those of you who worked in the front didn't see very much purslane or quickweed at all, thanks to the work of Sisters Hill's secret weapon in the war against weeds, our volunteer Pete Christman!) Quickweed can flower and reseed several times in a season, due to its very short flowering cycle and the seeds' ability to sprout without a dormancy period. When unwanted plants keep popping up and reseeding or re-rooting themselves where we don't want them to be, it becomes too easy to anthropomorphize them. They're aggressive! They're bad! They're taking over! We can maybe take comfort in—or perhaps rue—the fact that oftentimes, the weeds we have are here because they were or are at some point wanted somewhere. With that, I'll leave you with a brief history of quickweed, otherwise known by its Latin name “galinsoga”:

“Galinsoga is named after a Spaniard, Mariano Martinez de Galinsoga, who first brought the plant from Peru to the Madrid Botanical Gardens. Traced to its roots in South America, galinsoga is cultivated for cooking and is known as *guascas* in the national Colombian Christmas soup, *ajiaco*, with chicken, corn and potatoes. The young stems and leaves are also enjoyed in Southeast Asia.” (from *Foraged Flavor*). Bon appetit!

******From EatingWell.com******

Roasted Cabbage with Chive-Mustard Vinaigrette - 4 servings

Ingredients

Cabbage

- 1/2 medium green cabbage(1-1 1/2 pounds), outer leaves removed
- 1 tablespoon extra-virgin olive oil
- 1/4 teaspoon salt
- 1/4 teaspoon freshly ground pepper

Vinaigrette

- 2 teaspoons Dijon mustard
- 2 teaspoons white balsamic or white-wine vinegar
- 1 teaspoon lemon juice
- 1/4 teaspoon freshly ground pepper
- 1/8 teaspoon salt
- 3 tablespoons minced fresh chives
- 2 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil

Directions

1. Preheat oven to 450°F. Coat a large baking sheet with cooking spray.
2. To prepare cabbage: Cut cabbage half into four wedges and cut out any thick core, leaving the wedges as intact as possible. Drizzle the cut sides with 1 tablespoon oil and sprinkle with 1/4 teaspoon each salt and pepper. Place the wedges flat-side down on the prepared baking sheet.
3. Roast the cabbage for 12 minutes. Carefully flip over (it's OK if it falls apart a little) and roast until browned on both sides, about 8 minutes more.
4. To prepare vinaigrette: Combine mustard, vinegar, lemon juice, pepper and 1/8 teaspoon salt in a small bowl. Add chives and oil; stir until well combined.
5. Transfer the cabbage to a serving plate (or plates) and drizzle with the vinaigrette while still hot. Serve hot or room temperature.

******From EatingWell.com******

Grilled Chicken Ratatouille - 4 servings

Ingredients

- 3 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil
- 3 tablespoons chopped fresh basil
- 1 tablespoon chopped fresh marjoram
- 1 teaspoon salt
- Canola or olive oil cooking spray
- 1 red bell pepper, halved lengthwise, stemmed and seeded
- 1 small eggplant, cut into 1/2-inch-thick rounds
- 1 medium zucchini, halved lengthwise
- 4 plum tomatoes, halved lengthwise
- 1 medium red onion, cut into 1/2-inch-thick rounds
- 4 boneless, skinless chicken breasts, (about 1 1/4 pounds), trimmed and tenders removed (see Note)
- 1/4 teaspoon freshly ground pepper
- 1 tablespoon red-wine vinegar