



Tucson Community Supported Agriculture Newsletter

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Winter 05
Week 5 of 12

Recipes in this Issue

Basic Tokyo Bekana Stir-Fry
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Dressing
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Photo courtesy Epicurious.com
Winter is just bursting with greens. Clockwise starting from top: Oak Leaf, Mizuna, Sorrel, Mustard, Frisee, Beet, Dandelion, Tatsoi, Romaine, and Arugula

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We welcome your suggestions, comments, contributions, and questions:

www.TucsonCSA.org

Spring Planting Begins Early at Crooked Sky Farms

The tendrils of summer are stirring, spiraling upward. Summer is in pursuit and gaining ground, preparing to pounce and devour. The unseasonably warm weather has permitted Farmer Frank to begin planting some of his summer crops, including squash, gourds, corn, and tomatoes. Normally, he doesn't begin planting these crops until February or March. The current 65- to 85-degree temperatures are perfect for seed germination. Even if the weather subsequently cools, once the plants are germinated, they can withstand mild frost. The rest of the crops are doing very well right now with the mild winter. The fields currently need irrigation every two to three weeks. Because the soil is rich in organic matter, it holds moisture well.

Fields to Tables Photography Exhibit at El Rio Neighborhood Center

Fields to Tables, a photography exhibit by Josh Schachter, opened yesterday at the El Rio Neighborhood Center, 1390 West Speedway, and runs through February 3. The exhibit examines the relationship between local crops, food preparation, and family by portraying the impact of history, culture, language, and literature on the local food system along the Santa Cruz River. Three neighborhood families and the Santa Cruz River Farmer's Market are featured. The El Rio Neighborhood Center is open Monday through Thursday 8 am to 9 pm, Friday 8 am to 6 pm, and Saturday 10 am to 2 pm.

New Deconstructing Dinner Weekly Radio Show

Member Maggie Newman brings to our attention a new weekly radio show broadcasting out of British Columbia but available on the Web at www.cjly.net/deconstructingdinner/. *Deconstructing Dinner* examines such questions as, "Why does my tomato look so perfect, and how much fuel was required for it to travel here from Mexico?" The show's mission is to discuss current food issues and assist listeners in making more educated choices when purchasing food either for the kitchen or at food-service establishments. The next show on January 12 focuses on eggs and the lives of battery hens (egg-layers) and discusses farming and production alternatives. The site also has links to a number of useful resources.

Super-Quick Greens Recipe

Any greens can be used although this recipe works best with broccoli rabe, turnip, mustard, or dandelion greens:

- ❖ Sauté five cloves of garlic in olive oil until they soften.
- ❖ Turn the heat way up and throw in the greens, sautéing until they wilt.
- ❖ Squirt on some red wine vinegar until it disappears.
- ❖ Serve over pasta.

Grassfed lamb from San Ysidro Farm

Order your pack by Tuesday, January 17. Cost is \$60 for an 8-lb pack and usually includes ground meat, chorizo, ½ shoulder or ½ leg, riblets, shanks, shoulder blade chops and center cut chops. Pick up will be either on January 24 or January 31

Tokyo Bekana

Sweet and crunchy Tokyo Bekana is the most satisfying of stir-fry vegetables: **easy** (requires no peeling), crunchy, nutritious, **quick-cooking**—and you get two different vegetables (leaf and stem) for the effort of one. Tokyo Bekana is very low in calories—about 15 per ½ cup. It supplies plenty of vitamin C and vitamin A and a fair quantity of calcium.

Also called *Pei Tsai*, Tokyo Bekana is a Japanese version of Small Chinese Cabbage, but the texture of its leaves is actually more leafy like the green *bok choy* than crisp like cabbage. It does *taste* like cabbage, however, and lacks the strong earthiness of other greens such as chard, spinach, or beets. The crunchy stalks are smooth and flat and bear a vague resemblance to celery minus grooves or strings, and they have a mild, juicy sweetness that suggests romaine lettuce.

Although you can eat Tokyo Bekana raw, cooking enhances it considerably, and it is excellent for stir-fry and soup. It takes just a few minutes to cook to a lovely crisp-tender texture. For stir-fries, there is nothing better: its stems turn almost creamy after cooking. Substitute Tokyo Bekana in any recipe that calls for the more commonly available *bok choy*.

Basic Tokyo Bekana Stir-Fry

Adapted from Elizabeth Schneider, *Uncommon Fruits & Vegetables*

Bright, healthy, flavorful, crunchy, quick-cooking: what more can you ask? This basic formula lends itself to additions of just about any vegetable that can be stir-fried: onion, scallion, carrot, red pepper, asparagus, mushrooms, corn, peas, or squash. Use either a wok or a large skillet. *3 or 4 servings*

1-1/2 pounds Tokyo Bekana, leaves and stems separated
1-2 tablespoons peanut oil, to taste
1 teaspoon sugar
¼ teaspoon minced garlic
Salt to taste

Cut stems at an angle into 1-inch pieces. Slice leaves separately. Have other ingredients ready. Heat wok or skillet; pour oil around the edge, then tip to distribute. Add stems and toss over moderately high heat until somewhat softened, but still crispy inside, about 3 minutes. Add sugar, garlic, salt, and reserved leaves, and toss until bok choy is crisp-tender, about 2 minutes.

Mizuna

Mizuna is a mustardy-cabbagey Japanese green. Packing plenty of flavor in their pretty, incised leaves, the smallest specimens have a mild and refreshing nip; the largest have a potent bite. Most Mizuna is found in salads. Larger Mizuna is best cooked, however briefly. Although it loses its mustardy edge, it keeps its bitter-green tang, its deep color, and its pretty cut-leaf shape and is a good addition to stir-fries.

Mizuna with Molasses and Peanut Dressing

Adapted from E. Schneider, *Vegetables from Amaranth to Zucchini*

This shiny, sweet-salty, chewy, and crunchy combination draws on staples from the American South, but substitutes Japanese Mizuna for curled mustard greens. The heated dressing slightly tenderizes the greens and creates a juicy setting for croutons. For a Southern touch, prepare dense and crunchy croutons from corn bread: cut unsweetened corn bread into ½-inch dice and bake in a low oven until crisp.

¾ pound Mizuna
1 small red onion, diced ¼ inch
1-1/4 cups croutons
¼ cup cider vinegar
2 scant tablespoons molasses
¼ to ½ teaspoon hot pepper sauce
2 teaspoons shoyu (Japanese soy sauce) or tamari
3 tablespoons corn oil
¼ cup roasted, salted, fine-chopped peanuts

Trim base of Mizuna. Cut into 2-inch sections, wash, and spin-dry. Place croutons in serving bowl. Top with Mizuna. In small skillet, combine vinegar, molasses, pepper sauce, shoyu, and onion. Bring to a boil, stirring. Add oil and return to a boil. Pour dressing over greens. Immediately toss to coat. Add peanuts and toss. Serve at once. *Serves 4*

Dandelion Greens

Dandelion is a corruption of the French *dent de lion* (“lion’s tooth”), referring to the plant’s prominently incised leaves. It has the distinction of being among the most vitamin-packed foods on the planet, containing more protein, fiber, calcium, and potassium than any other green; it’s also loaded with beta-carotene. When young, it is mild-flavored and can be eaten in salads; when mature, it is the most bitter of greens and is then best when stir-fried, with soy sauce or garlic and lemon. Use dandelion greens in any spinach recipe.

Dandelion Greens with Bacon

Adapted from Mark Bittman, *How to Cook Everything*

With good bacon, one of the great food combinations ever. Must be served warm. *Makes 4 servings.*

2 tablespoons olive oil
½ pound best slab bacon you can find, cut into ½-inch cubes
1 tablespoon chopped shallot
4 cups torn dandelion greens, trimmed, washed, and dried
¼ cup red wine vinegar
1 teaspoon Dijon mustard
Salt and freshly ground black pepper to taste

Place the olive oil in a skillet and turn the heat to medium. Add the bacon and cook slowly until it is crisp all over, about 10 minutes. Add the shallot and cook 1-2 minutes longer, until the shallot softens. Keep the bacon warm in the skillet. Place greens in a salad bowl. Add the vinegar and mustard to the skillet, and bring just to a boil, stirring. Pour the liquid and bacon over the greens, season to taste (it shouldn’t need much salt), and serve immediately.