

Spicy Braised Collard Stems with Chile Tops

Yield: 6 servings

Scraps used: Collard green stems, chile tops and bacon fat.

Why: Most collard recipes call to discard the stems because they're so fibrous, but if you chop them small, they will cook just like the leafy greens. The finished dish is just as delicious and a lot thriftier than traditional collard greens, and the pleasantly-supple stems give these greens a distinctive bite. The chili tops take the place of any hot pepper in your recipe—and reserving bacon fat means there's no need to purchase smoked meat for these greens.

The salt: Adding the right salt to the poaching liquid for vegetables helps to season them thoroughly. In this recipe, I choose Morton® Coarse Kosher Salt because it is coarse enough to pick up and pinch, which makes snatching a handful effortless. There's no need to salt at the end as you're going to use the cooking liquid (pot liqueur) to finish the greens.

Ingredients:

2 bunches collard greens with long stems

Small handful (about 2 tablespoons) Morton® Coarse Kosher Salt

2 tablespoons olive oil

2 tablespoons bacon fat (or you can substitute more olive oil)

1 medium onion, chopped fine

4 garlic cloves, chopped fine

Stems and tops from 3 to 6 serrano peppers or jalapeños (or 1 to 2 whole chile peppers), chopped fine

¼ cup apple cider vinegar

2 teaspoons sugar

Pot liqueur *

*Scraps TV Tip: Considered a delicacy in the South, the liquid left behind after cooking greens is called “pot liquor” or “potlikker.” This iron- and Vitamin-D rich broth is an excellent alternative to stock in making pan sauces and gravies.

Directions:

Prepare the greens: Strip the stems from the collard leaves by cutting along the stems on both sides. Cut the stems in thin slices and the leaves in thin strips.

Boil the greens: Throw the salt in a big heavy pot (Dutch oven works great) of boiling water. Toss in the collard greens. Boil until the pieces of stem are tender, about 30 minutes. Drain, but keep the pot liquor.

Flavor and finish the greens: Return the pot to medium heat. Add the olive oil and bacon fat and wait a few seconds. Toss in the onion and stir to coat with hot fat. Cook

until the onion loses its raw look and becomes translucent. Add the garlic and chile tops and stir for a minute until the mix smells strong. Add the greens and mix everything up. Begin adding pot liquor, a cup at a time, cooking until the liquor boils away, stirring most of the time. Keep adding more liquor until the greens are very tender and flavorful, about 10 minutes total cooking time. Stir in the vinegar and sugar, and boil another minute.