

A Mess o' Meatless Greens



Ask anybody in my family and they will say, “There ain’t nothing like a mess o’ greens.” My grandmother would more often than not cook a combination of them: mustard, turnip, and kale. She would throw in some wild greens, too, when she had them on hand.

These are not the ham hock or fatback greens of my childhood. Yet

they are just as satisfying and perhaps a bit more healthful—it ain't my place to say. Making a good pot of greens calls for careful seasoning and the right combination of oil and cooking method. I like my greens with a little heft in them now, but certainly not like the raw greens I'm often served in restaurants, especially in the North. Collards were not the greens of choice up on the creek, but they can be used here. The sautéed method will give you a nice wilted, softened mess of greens that makes a tasty side dish, but you can also achieve the old-fashioned pot likker with vegetable broth as the recipe below calls for.

Serves 4 to 6

1½ to 2 pounds kale, turnip, and/or mustard greens
3 tablespoons vegetable oil
1 large onion, chopped
3 garlic cloves, minced
1 teaspoon table salt, plus more as needed
4 cups (1 quart) vegetable broth, homemade or store-bought (32 ounces; you might not need it all)
Freshly ground black pepper

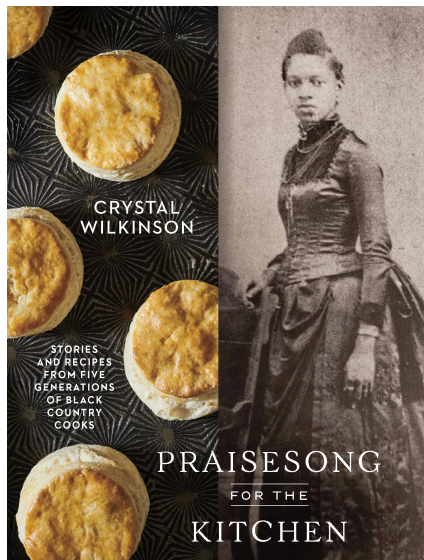
To prep your greens, first strip the leaves from their stalks. (This includes any pre-chopped greens, which are often full of stalks.) Discard or save them for another use; stalks are edible but are not used in this recipe.

Rinse the leaves well in cold water, even if they're bagged and prewashed, discarding any discolored ones. (There is nothing worse than sandy greens, and I've had many in fancy restaurants, but we won't dwell on that.) Stack and roll the leaves, then cut them into 1-inch-wide ribbons. Or if you are fond of the tearing method, tear bits of leaves apart instead of cutting.

Heat the oil in a large pot over medium heat. Stir in the onion and garlic. Cook for 6 to 8 minutes, stirring often, until the onion is translucent. Season with the salt.

Add your ribbons (or torn leaves) of greens to the pot a handful at a time. As they wilt down, add just enough of the broth to keep the greens from scorching. Add a little more liquid each time as they cook down (they should not be completely submerged, however). Cook the greens, uncovered, for 5 to 10 minutes, until they are tender but not mushy. Taste and season with more salt if necessary and/or pepper.

Serve hot, with some of their pot likker.



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