

Spring Vegetable Ragout

Serves 6 – 8 as a main course.

3 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil
2 shallots, finely diced
3 tablespoons garlic shoots or green garlic, chopped
1 cup fresh peas, shelled
1 cup snap peas, trimmed and cut in half
4-6 cups pea tendrils, roughly chopped into 4-inch pieces
½ cup vegetable stock or chicken stock
2 tablespoons butter
Salt and pepper to taste

- ♦ Heat a medium sauté pan on medium-high. Add the oil and heat through.
- ♦ Add the shallots and toss in the oil. Cook for 4-5 minutes, stirring occasionally. The shallots will begin to brown and crisp at the edges.
- ♦ Add the garlic shoots and peas and toss them for 1-2 minutes.
- ♦ Increase the heat to high, add the snap peas and pea tendrils with a splash of stock and continue to toss and cook for 3-4 minutes. When the pea tendrils have wilted and the peas are soft, season with salt and pepper and transfer the veggies to a serving platter.
- ♦ Place the sauté pan back on the heat and add the remaining stock. Bring the stock to a boil and then remove from the heat. Add the butter and taste for salt and pepper. Pour the butter broth over the veggies and serve.
- ♦ Note: this dish is great with steamed rice, potatoes or with pasta.

Spring Greens with Herb Vinaigrette

Serves 8 – 10 as a starter.

1 head green leaf lettuce
1 head red leaf lettuce
¼ pound baby spinach
2 tablespoons cilantro leaves, picked from the stem
¼ cup small basil leaves, picked from the stem
2 tablespoons tarragon or chervil leaves, picked from the stem
3-4 tablespoons sherry-thyme vinaigrette
Salt and pepper to taste

- ♦ Cut off the base of the lettuces and separate the leaves.
- ♦ Fill a large bowl with cold water and submerge the lettuces into the water. Work in small batches and make sure there is plenty of room in the bowl for the dirt particles to fall to the bottom of the basin.
- ♦ Using a salad spinner, drain the lettuces and spin until they are very dry. Repeat with the remaining lettuces and spinach, making sure to change the water between batches.
- ♦ Wash and dry the cilantro, basil and tarragon leaves. The leaves should separate from one another if they are dry enough.
- ♦ Break up the lettuces into bite size pieces and place in a bowl large enough to toss all the ingredients. Add the spinach, herb leaves and toss the salad with 3-4 tablespoons of the vinaigrette. Use just enough vinaigrette to coat the lettuces and not make it too wet.
- ♦ Sprinkle the salad with salt and pepper and serve.

Sherry-Lemon-Thyme Vinaigrette

2 tablespoons shallots, finely diced
1 tablespoon thyme, roughly chopped
1 tablespoon tarragon, roughly chopped
1 teaspoon lemon zest

½-1 teaspoon sugar
⅓ cup sherry vinegar
3 tablespoons lemon juice
¾-1 cup extra virgin olive oil
Salt and cracked black pepper to taste

- ♦ Place shallots, thyme, tarragon, lemon zest, ½ teaspoon sugar, vinegar and lemon juice in a bowl and whisk to mix.
- ♦ Gradually whisk in the olive oil starting with ¾ cup and adding more if the vinaigrette is acidic.
- ♦ Add salt and cracked black pepper to taste.
- ♦ Taste and add more sugar to balance the acidity if necessary.

Tips for making a flavorful, balanced salad

- ♦ Salad greens should be spun dry! Oils cannot adhere to lettuces that are wet.
- ♦ Use your salad greens to taste your dressings and vinaigrettes, making sure the bitterest green can hold up to the flavors in the dressing.
- ♦ Your vinaigrette is as good as your ingredients. Better quality vinegars, fresh juices and olive oils are very noticeable in vinaigrette. The better the quality, the less “other ingredients” you will need to add.
- ♦ Sugar is used to balance acidity in a vinaigrette. Use it lightly and add more as needed.
- ♦ If you use raw garlic, shallots or onions in a dressing make sure it sits for at least 30 minutes before serving. The aromatics need to macerate in the vinegar before using.
- ♦ When tossing your greens, start with 1-2 tablespoons of the dressing and add more as needed.
- ♦ Be sure to sprinkle salt and pepper to bring out the flavors of the greens.

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