

Heart Spring Health

A Spring Tonic

Vegetable soups from Deborah Madison's Kitchen

This soup uses herbs (sorrel, arugula, boarge), wild greens (nettles), and oddities (radish and carrot tops)—and more familiar beet greens, all virtuous and good to eat. It can absorb numerous greens or succeed with a smaller selection but whether there's predominance of bitterness (from escarole), sharpness (from sorrel), or indeterminate wildness—from nettles, quelites (wild spinach), and the like—will depend on your own leanings. When they come together in a single pot, the sum of flavor is always larger than the parts.

2 Tablespoons olive oil or butter, plus extra for serving
2 small potatoes, diced (or turnips should you have a potato or night shade intolerance)
1 large onion, diced
2 carrots, diced
5 garlic gloves, chopped (optional)
A bushy thyme sprig or a few pinches of dried
Handful of fresh parsley
Handful of watercress (available in grocery stores in the spring)
2 cups of blanched chopped nettles (available in the spring at the farmers market, co-ops or wild-crafted* on your next hike)
2 cups sorrel, chopped (available in the spring) another other dark green herb can be substituted for a different flavor—basil, cilantro etc)
2 cups chard, beet greens, wild spinach, or amaranth greens.
1 or 2 handfuls of odd greens: several borage leaves, radish tops, carrot tops, etc (whatever you have on hand or in your garden)
Sea salt and freshly ground pepper
Fresh lemon juice or vinegar to taste
Extra virgin olive oil
Chive blossoms or wild mustard petals, when available.

1. Warm the oil in a wide soup pot. Add the potatoes, onion, carrots, garlic, thyme, and parsley. Give a stir, cook over medium heat for several minutes, and then add the greens. Season with 1 ½ tsp of salt. Cook over medium heat until the greens have collapsed, about 5 minutes, turning them every so often.

2. Once the greens have wilted, add 2 quarts water. Bring to a boil, then lower the heat and simmer until the potatoes are soft, 25 minutes or so. Cool briefly, then puree, either leaving the soup with some texture or making it smooth.

3. Taste for salt, season with pepper, and add a little lemon juice or vinegar to sharpen the flavors. Finish with a swirl of extra virgin olive oil and if possible, chive blossoms or the yellow petal of wild mustard.

*Please adhere to the ethics of wild-crafting:
http://www.botanicalstudies.net/wildcrafting/wildcrafting_beginners.php