

Braised Winter Greens

This is a great twist on traditional winter greens. Whether they be collards, mustard greens, chard or kale, they make for an excellent source of vitamins and minerals during the cold months of the year. Traditional preparations using ham, bacon or trotters can preclude some family and friends from partaking whether they be vegetarian or simply don't eat pork. To overcome this small obstacle, I replace the pork in traditional recipes with my own brand of flavor – smoked tomatoes.

Olive oil, as needed

1 gallon of winter greens (these can be any one or a mix of winter greens. My personal favorite is to have a mix ½ gallon of collards, 1 quart of Swiss chard and 1 quart of kale)

3 c of julienne onions

2 tsp garlic, minced

2 smoked tomatoes (directions for smoking follows)

4-6 c apple cider

1 c cider vinegar

salt and pepper to taste

crushed red pepper

Heat a large stockpot over medium heat. Add enough oil to coat the bottom and have a little excess. Add the onions and sauté until they begin to turn brown. Add the garlic and sauté for another minute, but do not allow the garlic to turn brown. Add the crushed red pepper and the smoke tomatoes. Using a spoon, stir the mixture together while crushing the tomatoes. The tomatoes should give off enough moisture to stop the browning of the onions. Add the cider and the vinegar. Then add all the greens. Reduce the heat to medium-low and put a lid on the pot. As the greens break down they will give up some moisture also. Stir them every 5 minutes or so to ensure even cooking. If your pot gives up too much moisture during the cooking process, you can add a little water in increments to offset that. Add as much water as you would like to have “pot likker”. These greens can be made up to three days ahead and simply reheated and served. I would go so far as to say the flavor actually improves after they sit for a day. Enjoy!

So the one weirdness here is the smoked tomatoes, right? Well just to let you know it is super-easy and super-fast to do. There are stove top smokers available at places like Sur la Table for around \$30 and smoking guns that run a little higher. But you can make one yourself out of equipment you have at home. When I do it at home, I get my cheapest pot with tall sides and line the bottom with aluminum foil. I put my soaked chips on top of the foil and put the pot over high heat. Whatever I am smoking goes into a colander or other perforated pan that fits inside the pot but doesn't touch the bottom. There have been times I've had to get very creative with this part, sometimes suspending a colander over the pot with chopsticks weaved through the handles. Anyways, once the smoke starts put your loaded perforated pan in the

“smoker” and cover with a lid or another piece of aluminum. Keep in mind this is a hot smoking process which will cook your foods or at least heat them up, to a degree. So don’t let the tomatoes go too long or they’ll turn to pulp. Make sure your hood is working well or you may want to consider doing this smoking on the grill outside.