

Star-Telegram

For these vegetable recipes, leave no scrap behind

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PARIS -- As you're chopping and peeling veggies this week for Thanksgiving side dishes, don't toss those leafy celery tops, cilantro stems and onion skins in the trash. Instead, do what I do and make a meal out of them -- there's something great to be discovered in just about every scrap, I've learned.

I'll admit, I've not always been this thrifty and clever. But after I discovered earlier this year what you can make with carrot leaves, I started thinking about what else I could do with them -- turn them into galettes (recipe follows), chop them up into pesto, or sprinkle them on top of soups or salads as a garnish.

Then I thought about all of the different peels and skins I'd normally throw into the garbage (or into the compost pile, if I weren't living in Paris), and what I could turn them into.

So I started saving it all. When I'd chop up my veggies for soups or whatever, I'd stuff the ends, the leaves and the once-deemed unusable bits in plastic bags and save them in the freezer. When I'd collect a bagful, I'd make veggie stock and freeze that, too. It made the most delicious stock I'd ever tasted. Now I never make a soup without it.

I feel so silly for not thinking of this before. We enthusiastically eat turnip greens in the States, but in France, they've never made it onto a plate, much less a menu, because they're not available -- turnips are sold at the markets with their tasty leaves already removed.

On the other hand, carrots are usually sold in neat bundles of a dozen or so with their fluffy ends attached, but the vendors will automatically cut them off if you don't tell them not to; ditto with leeks, beets and celery. So it pays to pay attention.

Practicality aside, these leaves, peels and stems pack loads of flavor, even though they're not the prettiest edible parts.

The broccoli stalk-cheddar cheese soup doesn't give a hint that it's made from broccoli stalks instead of the florets; it has the same great broccoli taste. The mushroom-stem ravioli is so easy and quick to make that you will start wondering what else you can spoon between two thin layers of pasta. And the carrot top galettes are a clever way to work pancakes into dinner; but they're a much a healthier option.

It's so satisfying making something out of ... well, almost nothing, and knowing that in doing so, you're being penny-wise and environmentally smart.

So this holiday season, start saving your scraps. With all of the extra money that you will save, you will be thankful that you did.

MUSHROOM-STEM RAVIOLI

Makes 16 to 20 ravioli; serves 2

Olive oil

1 garlic clove, minced

About 20 mushroom stems, chopped

4 tops of green onions, chopped

Sea salt and pepper

1 3/4 cups flour

1/2 teaspoon sea salt

2 eggs, lightly beaten

2 tablespoons olive oil

About 2 tablespoons of ice water (more or less depending on your dough; just use what you need to make it come together)

2 tablespoons fresh goat cheese

1/2 stick of butter

A small handful (12 to 15) sage leaves, stems removed

Grated Parmesan, for serving

1. Drizzle a little bit of olive oil in a skillet and add the garlic. Turn the heat to medium-low and cook just until you can smell the garlic — this'll take only a minute or two. Now add the chopped mushroom stems, green onion tops and a pinch of sea salt and pepper. Cook until the mushroom pieces are browned and crispy, then pour this mixture into a bowl and let it cool.
2. Make your ravioli. Put your flour and salt in a bowl (or your food processor) and whisk (or pulse if using a food processor). Add the eggs and olive oil and only enough ice water for the dough to come together in a solid mass. When it does, turn it out onto a lightly floured surface and roll it out as thin as you can. Using a biscuit cutter, make as many rounds as you can and put them on a piece of parchment (lightly dusted with flour so they don't stick).
3. Fold the 2 tablespoons of goat cheese into the mushroom mixture, and spoon a bit of this into the center of each piece of dough. Top with the other piece of dough and gently press it down around the sides with your fingers, trying to get as much air out as possible. Use the tines of a dinner fork to securely seal the edges. Now you can either cook the ravioli right away in boiling salted water, until they're cooked through (about 10 minutes), or refrigerate them, as I often do, until dinner.
4. When you decide to make your ravioli, as you drop them into the pot of salted water, melt the butter in a skillet (or saucepan for less splatters) over low to medium-low heat — you want the butter to constantly bubble, but not get so hot that it burns. After about 5 minutes, you'll notice brown bits on the bottom of the pan, so give the pan a swirl and let it keep going until the butter itself changes color (this shouldn't take more than 10 minutes total). When the butter's right where you want it, toss the sage leaves in and let them cook until crispy. Your ravioli should be ready right about the same time. Just divide them among two plates and spoon the browned butter with sage over each, and serve with fresh Parmesan.

Nutritional analysis per serving: 958 calories, 59 grams fat, 86 grams carbohydrates, 21 grams protein, 282 milligrams cholesterol, 804 milligrams sodium, 3 grams dietary fiber, 55 percent of calories from fat.

CARROT-TOP GALETTES

Makes about a dozen

- 1 bunch of the tops of carrots, well-rinsed and leaves removed and chopped
- 1 cup quinoa flakes
- 1 cup buttermilk
- 2 eggs, lightly beaten
- 1 garlic clove, minced
- 1/4 cup of grated Parmesan
- 1 teaspoon of cumin
- Sea salt and pepper
- Olive oil

1. Toss the carrot-top leaves in a bowl along with the rest of the other ingredients and mix well. Drizzle a bit of olive oil on nonstick skillet (I like to put my oil on a paper towel and simply use this to spread it around so I use less oil), and turn the heat to medium.
2. When it's hot, add tablespoonfuls of batter to make your galettes, turning them over once browned on the first side. Serve warm.

Nutritional analysis per serving: 87 calories, 3 grams fat, 11 grams carbohydrates, 4 grams protein, 37 milligrams cholesterol, 67 milligrams sodium, 1 gram dietary fiber, 34 percent of calories from fat.

BROCCOLI STALK-CHEDDAR CHEESE SOUP

Makes 4 servings

- Olive oil
- 1 shallot, finely chopped
- 6 cups chopped broccoli stalks

1 quart (4 cups) veggie or chicken stock

A few sprigs of fresh thyme, leaves removed

Sea salt and pepper

2 cups of grated cheddar cheese

1. Drizzle a bit of olive oil into your stockpot and toss in the shallots. Turn the heat to medium-low and let cook just until the shallots begin to soften — you'll be able to smell them before you see that they are ready, so don't wander off; let your nose be your guide.

2. Add the chopped broccoli stalks, the veggie stock, 2 cups of water, a big pinch of sea salt and pepper, and the fresh thyme. Cover, turn the heat up to medium and let it come to a boil. Once it boils, reduce the heat and cook until the broccoli stalks are soft — this shouldn't take more than 15 to 20 minutes.

3. Once the broccoli is cooked, turn off the heat and use your hand immersion blender (or pour it into your regular blender — if you go this route, you'll have to work in batches) to blend your soup till smooth. Stir in the cheese, let it melt, and serve immediately with croutons and a bit more fresh thyme.

Nutritional analysis per serving: 320 calories, 25 grams fat, 8 grams carbohydrates, 28 grams protein, 59 milligrams cholesterol, 451 milligrams sodium, 3 grams dietary fiber, 60 percent of calories from fat.

RADISH LEAF-BASIL PESTO

Makes about 1 cup

A big handful of radish leaves, well rinsed

A big handful of fresh basil leaves

4 tablespoons of olive oil

1 garlic clove, minced

1/2 cup of grated Parmesan

Sea salt and pepper

About 1/4 teaspoon of lemon zest (or more to taste)

1. Put your radish leaves, basil, olive oil, and garlic in a food processor and pulse a few times. Add the Parmesan, pinch of sea salt and pepper, and lemon zest and taste for seasonings. This is best if you let it rest for an hour before eating.

Nutritional analysis per serving: 42 calories, 4 grams fat, trace carbohydrates, 1 gram protein, 2 milligrams cholesterol, 47 milligrams sodium, trace dietary fiber, 88 percent of calories from fat.

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