

pending on their size and age, they can be mild and sweet or mustardy. Collards do not form a head but grow on stalks that are too tough to eat. The leaves cook fairly quickly. Choose crisp bunches with no yellow or torn leaves. Store in perforated plastic vegetable bags in the refrigerator crisper.

Collards are superb seasoned just with vinegar and hot pepper sauce, but they also have affinities with garlic, onions, chili peppers, lemon, and other piquant flavors. Allow about 8 ounces per serving.

To Prepare: After rinsing in lukewarm water, strip the leaves from the inedible stalks. Stack the leaves, roll them up, and slice into very thin strips for fastest cooking or cut into wider ribbons and then chop.

To Boil: Follow the method for mustard greens, 388, and cook the prepared leaves until tender but not mushy, 10 to 15 minutes, depending on the age and thickness of the leaves. Baby greens will cook very quickly. Drain.

To Braise: Follow the method for mustard greens, 388, and cook the prepared leaves until tender but not mushy, 12 to 15 minutes, though baby greens will cook very quickly. Drain. Collards can also be braised with bacon, like kale, 379.

To Microwave: In a 3-quart baking dish, place 1¼ pounds whole leaves with the water that clings to them from rinsing. Cover and cook on high until tender, 7 to 10 minutes, stirring after 3 minutes. Let stand, covered, for 2 minutes.

SOUTHERN COLLARD GREENS *6 servings*

All greens on the tough side, such as turnip greens, mustards, and dandelions, can be cooked by this method.

Boil gently, uncovered, in a large pot until the broth is flavorful, 30 to 40 minutes:

10 cups water

5 ounces salt pork or smoked pork neck bones

Tear into small pieces:

3 pounds collard greens, well washed

Add to the pot along with:

1 small dried red chili pepper, seeds removed
(optional)

Simmer, uncovered, just until tender, 15 to 30 minutes, stirring occasionally. Drain and remove the salt pork or neck bones. Serve with:

Red wine vinegar or Southeast Asian Peanut Dipping Sauce, 83

COLLARDS WITH RICE *4 servings*

Medium-grain rice yields a denser texture than long-grain, but any uncooked white rice can be used.

Heat in a medium saucepan:

2 tablespoons olive oil

Add and cook until tender, about 5 minutes:

1 large sweet onion, chopped, or 1 bunch scallions,
coarsely chopped

Add:

1 bunch collard greens (about 12 ounces), well
washed, patted dry, stemmed, leaves coarsely
chopped

Cover and cook gently for 10 minutes. Then stir in:

1 cup medium-grain rice

Cook, stirring, until the rice is well coated with oil and starting to look opaque, 3 to 5 minutes. Stir in:

1¼ cups very hot chicken stock or water

2 tablespoons minced fresh dill, or 2 teaspoons
dried

½ teaspoon salt

¼ teaspoon ground black pepper

Bring to a boil. Reduce the heat to low and simmer, tightly covered, for 15 minutes. Check a grain of rice, and if it seems nearly done, remove the pot from the heat. Let stand, covered, for 5 to 10 minutes. (If it is far from done, cook for 3 to 5 minutes more, then let it stand.) Serve with:

Hot red pepper sauce

CORN

The variety of corn we call sweet corn, which nowadays is the only type we eat fresh, has undergone radical change, becoming sweeter every year. Corn geneticists have engineered a bundle of sugar-enhanced and supersweet hybrids that are designed to remain sweet and nonstarchy while shipped and stored for supermarket sales. That is why we now get fresh supermarket corn, grown commercially in Florida, all winter long. Compared to most summer corn, winter corn lacks moisture, creaminess, tenderness, and all signs of just-picked freshness. Even these qualities, it must be added, vary widely in fresh summer corn, according to the variety. Use fresh winter corn, then, as an alternative to frozen or canned corn rather than as a substitute for fresh summer corn, which is in a category of its own.

We recommend that you give fresh ears of corn no more than a quick dip in a large quantity of boiling water, just long enough to heat them but short enough to keep them sweet, crisp, and tender. Remember, the kernels of these sweet corns taste delicious raw—in salads, salsas, garnishes, and purees. They do not need