



# Culinary Craftwork Newsletter

## I Love Greens!

### Introduction

[Culinary Craftwork](#) is my business, which specializes in offering private, semi-private, and group cooking classes. Some of you may remember me from when I taught cooking classes at Williams-Sonoma in Los Gatos. I am grateful to all of you who encouraged me to branch out on my own!

The Culinary Craftwork experience is different in that the classes I offer are fully customizable to what you want. I teach the classes in your own home at a time that is **convenient for you**. And I do all the shopping.

*It is my mission to give you the tools you need to prepare meals that will seduce you with savor and wow your guests.*

My website contains many sample menus that focus on building different skills, but I am happy to partner with you and come up with something new. The classes are fun, informal, and informative — and you get to eat!

The Culinary Craftwork newsletter is a monthly publication that focuses on seasonal fare with recipes and pictures. Future newsletters will also include a Q & A section, so please don't be shy—[email me](#), and I'll do my best to answer your questions and address any other issues that you may bring up.

This issue of the newsletter focuses on in-season green vegetables from the Farmers' Market, along with recipes that are really delicious, such as a bright, lemony risotto with wild mushrooms and asparagus and a decadent gratin of Swiss chard, oozing with bubbly cheese and topped with toasty breadcrumbs.



### Professional In-home Cooking Classes

Culinary Craftwork offers professionally taught in-home cooking classes by a chef with over 20 years' experience in restaurants and catering.

The classes are designed to build basic skills and boost confidence in the kitchen. I teach the classes in your own home, offer themed menus, cooking class parties and catered dinner parties.

Full class descriptions and prices are available on my website.

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## Spring Greens

Green is my favorite color and green vegetables rank high among my favorites. I can eat sautéed spinach every day and never grow tired of it, but I tend to forget about some of the other options. On a recent trip to my local farmers' market I wanted to see what was in season. We live in the Bay Area and are very blessed by a plethora of vegetables year 'round (I only wish I could get my husband to eat more of them!).

I wanted to do a feature on seasonal vegetables from the farmers' market because if one shops at Safeway or Whole Foods, there are so many choices, and not all of them are locally produced. For example, much of our winter produce comes from South America. I decided to narrow down the selection to a few of the green vegetables that looked particularly enticing: broccoli rabe, Swiss chard,

asparagus, and artichokes, though I subsequently decided to address in another issue, along with avocados (which are in season in Mexico and are currently being sold very inexpensively).

### About the recipes:

I would love to claim the recipes I have included as my own, but that would be wrong. In some cases I do write my own recipes, but this particular issue of the newsletter relies on recipes that I researched and chose based on my experience. In the case of Alton Brown's Wild Mushroom & Asparagus Risotto, I could have written a recipe for how I would make risotto (mostly, I do not use recipes at home), but that would have been substantially more time consuming for a process that is very similar. I hope these recipes work well for you and would love to receive your feedback on them.

*It is spring in the Bay Area, and we are blessed with a plethora of locally farmed produce; emerald hued greens with accents of vivid color are like edible jewels.*

## Blanch Broccoli Rabe for a milder flavor



Blanch broccoli rabe in lightly salted boiling water to help remove excessiveness bitterness.

## Broccoli Rabe

Commonly known in the United States as broccoli rabe, the vegetable is known by many other names and spellings around the world. A few of the many names are raab, rapa, rapini, rappi, rappone, fall and spring raab, turnip broccoli, taitcat, Italian or Chinese broccoli, broccoli di rape, Italian turnip, and turnip broccoli. If that isn't enough to confuse the matter, I don't know what is!

Originating in the Mediterranean and also China, broccoli rabe is actually a descendant from a wild herb. It is one of the most popular vegetables among the Chinese, although there is also another, less spicy vegetable, known as Chinese broccoli. Although it bears the name of broccoli, broccoli rabe is not related to broccoli. It is, however, closely related to turnips, which is probably why the leaves look like turnip greens. Good-quality broccoli rabe will have bright-green leaves that are crisp, upright, and not wilted as well as multiple small florets with clusters of broccoli-like buds. Avoid ones with leaves that are wilted, yellowing, or have dark green patches of slime. Broccoli rabe is at its peak from fall to spring.

Used extensively in Italian and Chinese cooking, it is not as widely used in the United States but is gaining in popularity. The flavor is a combination of bitter, spicy and mustardy, though some of the bitterness can be removed by blanching the broccoli rabe in boiling, salted water.

The stems are generally uniform in size (hence cook evenly) and need not be peeled. Remove the stems and sauté them before adding the leaves to the pan. This vegetable is a source of vitamins A, C, and K, as well as potassium. To maintain crispness, refrigerate it, unwashed, loosely wrapped in a plastic bag for up to 3 days.



## Pasta with Broccoli Rabe, Garlic, Anchovy & Hot Pepper

### Ingredients (4 Generous Servings)

2 bunches of broccoli rabe (2 lb.)  
 4 garlic cloves, minced  
 3 Tbs. extra virgin olive oil  
 4–6 oil-packed anchovy fillets  
 1 tsp. hot red pepper flakes  
 1 lb. orecchiette, cavatelli, or other pasta  
 Salt & freshly ground black pepper to taste  
 ½ cup grated Parmesan or Grana Padano cheese

### Directions

Clean and coarsely cut up the broccoli rabe.

Bring about 1-inch of lightly salted water to a boil in a heavy saucepan. Add the broccoli rabe and cook until it is tender and only a few tablespoons of liquid are left in the bottom of the pan. Set the pan aside, but keep warm.

In a separate sauté pan, gently sauté the garlic in the olive oil until it is soft and golden, then crush in the anchovy fillets until they melt into the oil. Add the red pepper and mix well.

Combine the garlic-pepper oil with the broccoli rabe.

Cook the pasta in lightly salted boiling water until done. Drain the pasta and immediately combine with the seasoned broccoli rabe. Sprinkle with half the cheese and pass the rest of the cheese at the table.

## Orecchiette



Orecchiette means little ears in Italian. Their cup shape is perfect for capturing light sauces. The pasta can be purchased fresh or dried.

When I was working at Le Madri, an Italian restaurant in New York, we frequently prepared pasta with broccoli rabe for “staff meal.” I quickly became a big fan of the spicy green. Le Madri was the first place I encountered orecchiette.

**Cook’s Notes:** A nice variation on this recipe is to add ½ lb of ground Italian sausage, sautéed, to the broccoli rabe.

## Asparagus Colors



Above are examples of white, green and purple asparagus varieties. They are available in season at many fine groceries.



## Asparagus

Asparagus spears are the young shoots of what would grow to be a giant fern-like plant if we didn't harvest them for food. Asparagus is a slow-growing plant (3 to 4 years to produce from the day the seed is planted) that takes up a good deal of space (several square feet per plant).

Most asparagus in the U.S. is green, with some purple varieties popping up every now and again. In Europe, fat, white asparagus — grown under banked soil or sand to keep it from turning green — is preferred.

Asparagus is harvested from March through June, depending on your region. Early in the season spears may be as thin as pencils; towards the end of the season fatter, meatier spears become available. Note that thickness in no way indicates tenderness, which is related to how the plant is grown and how soon it is eaten after harvest rather than spear size. Poorly or long-stored thin asparagus can be tough and flavorless; fresh, fat spears can be remarkably sweet and tender.

Buy asparagus as soon as possible after it is harvested. Farmers markets and stores that buy from local growers are your best bets for tender specimens. Look for smooth skin, bright green color, compact heads, and freshly cut ends. It's important to store asparagus in the vegetable crisper compartment of your refrigerator in a plastic bag.

Steaming asparagus is probably the most common cooking method; however I find that asparagus drizzled with a little good oil and roasted in the oven or on the grill brings out its natural sweetness and is very delicious, as well as healthy.



## Wild Mushroom & Asparagus Risotto

### Ingredients (6 Servings)

6 cups chicken broth  
1 cup dry white wine  
2 tablespoons unsalted butter  
1 cup finely chopped onion  
Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper  
2 cups Arborio rice  
5 ounces wild mushrooms, cooked and coarsely chopped, approximately  $\frac{3}{4}$  cup  
7 ounces asparagus, cooked and cut into 1-inch pieces, approximately  $1\frac{1}{2}$  cups  
2 ounces grated Parmesan, approximately  $\frac{1}{2}$  cup  
1 teaspoon grated lemon zest  
 $\frac{1}{4}$  teaspoon freshly grated nutmeg

### Directions

In a medium saucepan with a lid, combine chicken broth and white wine and heat just to simmering. Keep warm.

In a large 3 to 4-quart heavy saucepan over medium heat, melt the butter. Add the onions and a pinch of salt and sweat until translucent, about 5 minutes. Add the rice and stir. Cook for 3 to 5 minutes or until the grains become translucent around the edges. Be careful not to allow the grains or the onions to brown.

Reduce the heat to low. Add enough of the wine and chicken stock just to cover the top of the rice. Stir or move the pan often, until the liquid is completely absorbed into rice. Once absorbed, add another amount of liquid just to cover the rice and continue stirring or moving as before. There should be just enough liquid left to repeat 1 more time. It should take approximately 35 to 40 minutes for all of the liquid to be absorbed. After the last addition of liquid has been mostly absorbed, add the mushrooms and asparagus and stir until risotto is creamy and asparagus is heated through. Remove from the heat and stir in the Parmesan, lemon zest, and nutmeg. Taste and season with salt and freshly ground black pepper.

*Recipe courtesy of Alton Brown, at the Food Network.*

## Dried Mushrooms



If fresh wild mushrooms are not available, reconstituted dried mushrooms can be used instead. Place 2 ounces of dried mushrooms into a bowl and cover with boiling water. Allow to sit for about 30 minutes or until all the mushrooms are soft and pliable. Strain the mushroom soaking liquid through a paper coffee filter or paper towel to remove sand and grit, and add it to the chicken broth.

## Rainbow Chard



### Health Benefits of Swiss chard:

Both the leaves and the roots of Swiss chard have been the subject of fascinating health studies. It is said that the combination of traditional nutrients, phytonutrients (particularly anthocyanins), plus fiber in this food seems particularly effective in preventing digestive tract cancers.

If vegetables got grades for traditional nutrients alone, Swiss chard would be one of the vegetable valedictorians. The vitamin and mineral profile of this leafy green vegetable contains enough "excellents" to ensure its place at the head of the vegetable Dean's List.

According to the rating system used by the World's Healthiest Foods, a non-profit foundation, Swiss chard wins excellent marks for its concentrations of vitamin K, vitamin A, vitamin C, magnesium, manganese, potassium, iron, vitamin E, and dietary fiber.

Swiss chard also emerges as a very good or good source of copper, calcium, vitamin B2, vitamin B6, protein, phosphorus, vitamin B1, zinc, folate, biotin, niacin and pantothenic acid.

<http://www.whfoods.com>



## Swiss Chard

Similar to spinach and beets with a flavor that is bitter, pungent and slightly salty, Swiss chard is truly an outstanding vegetable with its exceptionally impressive list of health promoting nutrients.

Chard, along with kale, mustard greens and collard greens, is one of several leafy green vegetables often referred to as "greens." It is a tall leafy green vegetable with a thick, crunchy stalk that comes in white, red or yellow with wide fan-like green leaves.

Chard belongs to the same family as beets and spinach and shares a similar taste profile: it has the bitterness of beet greens and the slightly salty flavor of spinach leaves. Both the leaves and stalk of chard are edible, although the stems vary in texture with the white ones generally being the most tender.

Chard lends itself to quick sautés and braises, as well as pasta dishes. The appellation "Swiss" denotes chard varieties separate from French spinach; it has been traced back to Sicily and is available throughout the year.



## Rosemary Lamb Chops with Swiss Chard and Balsamic Syrup

### Ingredients (4 Servings)

#### For balsamic syrup

- ¼ cup balsamic vinegar
- ¼ teaspoon minced fresh rosemary
- 1/8 teaspoon bruised black peppercorns

#### For chard

- 1 bunch Swiss chard (1 lb)
- ¼ cup chopped red onion
- 1 teaspoon finely chopped garlic
- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- ½ teaspoon salt
- ¼ teaspoon black pepper
- 1 tablespoon water

#### For lamb chops

- 8 rib lamb chops (1 1/4 lb total), trimmed of all fat
- 1 teaspoon finely chopped garlic
- ½ teaspoon Kosher salt
- ½ teaspoon finely chopped fresh rosemary
- ¼ teaspoon black pepper

## Rosemary Herb



Fresh rosemary is very pungent and piney.

Use it sparingly to flavor delicate foods.

Lamb is a natural companion for rosemary.

## Use the Correct Pan



Stainless steel and enameled cast iron are nonreactive, but avoid pure aluminum and uncoated iron pans.

## Rosemary Lamb Chops with Swiss Chard and Balsamic Syrup

### Make syrup:

Simmer syrup ingredients in a 1- to 1 ½-quart nonreactive saucepan (see cooks' note, below) over moderate heat until just syrupy and reduced to about ¼ cup, about 8 minutes. Pour through a sieve into a small bowl, discarding rosemary and peppercorns.

### Sauté chard:

Cut stems and center ribs from chard, discarding any tough portions, then cut stems and ribs crosswise into ¼-inch-thick slices. Stack chard leaves and roll into cylinders. Cut cylinders crosswise to make 1-inch-wide strips.

Cook onion and garlic in oil in a 12-inch nonreactive skillet over moderate heat, stirring occasionally, until onion begins to soften, about 4 minutes. Add chard stems and ribs, salt, and pepper and cook, stirring occasionally, until stems are just tender, about 6 minutes. Stir in chard leaves and water and cook, stirring occasionally, until tender, about 8 minutes.

### Broil chops while chard cooks:

Preheat broiler. Sprinkle chops with garlic, salt, rosemary, and pepper, then broil on a lightly oiled broiler pan, 4 to 5 inches from heat, turning over once, for medium-rare, 6 to 7 minutes total. Serve chops and chard drizzled with balsamic syrup.

*Recipe from Epicurious.com*



## Swiss Chard Gratin

### Ingredients (6 Servings)

- 5 tablespoons unsalted butter
- 1 cup fresh white bread crumbs
- 3 oz Gruyère cheese, grated (1 cup)
- 1 garlic clove, finely chopped
- 1 tablespoon finely chopped mixed fresh herbs (preferably chives, tarragon, and flat-leaf, Italian parsley)
- 1/8 teaspoon freshly grated nutmeg
- 1 cup low-sodium chicken broth
- ½ cup heavy cream
- 1 tablespoon all-purpose flour
- 1 medium onion, finely chopped
- 3 lb Swiss chard, leaves and stems separated and both cut into 1-inch pieces
- 1 lb spinach, coarse stems discarded, leaves coarsely chopped



## Swiss Chard Gratin — Continued

Melt 2 tablespoons butter and toss with bread crumbs, cheese, garlic, herbs, half of the nutmeg, and salt & pepper to taste in a bowl.

Boil broth in a small saucepan until reduced by half. Add cream and keep warm.

Melt 1 tablespoon butter in a small heavy saucepan over moderate heat and stir in flour. Cook roux, whisking, 1 minute, then whisk in broth mixture and boil, whisking, 1 minute. Season sauce with salt and pepper.

Preheat oven to 400°F.

Cook onion in remaining 2 tablespoons butter in a wide 8-quart heavy pot over moderately low heat, stirring, until softened. Add chard stems, remaining nutmeg, and salt and pepper to taste and cook, stirring, until vegetables are tender but not browned, about 8 minutes.

Increase heat to moderately high and add chard leaves and spinach by large handfuls, stirring, until all greens are wilted. Season with salt and pepper to taste.

Transfer vegetables to a colander to drain well and press out liquid with back of a large spoon. Toss vegetables with cream sauce and transfer to a buttered 12-inch oval gratin or 2-quart shallow baking dish, spreading evenly.

Top vegetables with bread crumbs and bake in middle of oven until bubbling and topping is golden, about 20 minutes.

*Recipe from Epicurious.com*

## Cooks' Notes



Gratin may be prepared, without baking, up to 4 hours ahead and chilled, covered. Bring to room temperature before baking.

Be sure to drain as much liquid as possible from vegetables so gratin isn't wet. The amount of greens may seem excessive, but they wilt down to a fraction of their raw quantity.

## Culinary Craftwork

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