

Barley with Peas, Shredded Carrots & Mint

This side dish is quick to prepare and is especially good with chicken.

- 2 tablespoons vegetable oil**
- 1 tablespoon butter**
- 1 medium onion, finely chopped**
- 3 cups cooked pearly barley**
- 1 cup shredded carrots**
- 1 package (10 ounces) frozen peas, partially thawed**
- ½ cup Rich Poultry Stock (page 40)**
- ¼ teaspoon salt**
- ¼ teaspoon pepper**
- 2 tablespoons minced fresh mint or 1 teaspoon dried**

1. In a large skillet, heat the oil and butter over medium heat. Add the onion and cook until lightly browned.
2. Stir in the barley and cook for 5 minutes. Add the carrots, peas, stock, salt, and pepper. Cover and cook for 5 minutes. Stir in the mint.

MAKES 6 SERVINGS

Barley with Fennel & Corn: Decrease the oil to 1 tablespoon, and increase the butter to 2 tablespoons. Replace the carrots with 1 cup diced fresh fennel. Use 1 package (10 ounces) frozen corn kernels instead of the peas. Instead of the mint, use 1 teaspoon minced fresh tarragon or ½ teaspoon dried.

Glazed Carrots with Indian Spices

This recipe is based on a French treatment of carrots called carottes Vichy, in which the carrots are cooked with a splash of Vichy mineral water and butter.

- 1 pound carrots, sliced $\frac{1}{4}$ inch thick**
- 1 cup water**
- 1 tablespoon butter**
- 2 teaspoons agave nectar or mild honey**
- $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon garam masala**
- $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon cardamom**
- $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon salt**

1. In a large skillet, combine the carrots, water, butter, agave nectar, garam masala, cardamom, and salt. Bring to a boil over high heat, and cook until the carrots are tender and glazed and the liquid has evaporated, 10 to 12 minutes. Add a little more water if the carrots aren't cooked by the time the water has evaporated.

MAKES 4 SERVINGS

Brussels Sprouts in Walnut-Butter Sauce

To speed up the cooking of the brussels sprouts, cut a small X in the stem end of each.

2 containers (10 ounces each) brussels sprouts

¼ cup (½ stick) butter

1 cup coarsely chopped walnuts

1. In a steamer, cook the brussels sprouts until tender, about 10 minutes.
2. Meanwhile, in a heavy cast-iron skillet, combine the butter and walnuts, and cook over medium-high heat until the butter foams and turns deep tan and the nuts are toasted.
3. Place the brussels sprouts in a serving dish, and pour the butter evenly over the sprouts.

MAKES 4 TO 6 SERVINGS

Sautéed Corn with Sour Cream

To get the most out of a fresh ear of corn, use the sharp side of a knife to slice off the kernels, then use the dull back side to push the corn germ out of the cobs.

4 teaspoons butter
¼ cup chopped red bell pepper
2 tablespoons chopped sweet onion
2 cups fresh corn kernels (4 to 6 ears)
Pinch of cayenne pepper
Salt
¾ cup sour cream

1. In a medium skillet, melt the butter over medium heat. Add the bell pepper and onion, and cook until softened, about 5 minutes.
2. Stir in the corn and cayenne, and cook until crisp-tender, about 5 minutes.
3. Season lightly with salt. Stir in the sour cream.

MAKES 4 SERVINGS

Asparagus-Tomato Sauté

You can use small, sweet grape tomatoes instead of cherry tomatoes in this quick side dish.

- 1 tablespoon olive oil**
- 1 medium onion, chopped**
- 1 pound asparagus, cut into 1-inch pieces**
- ¼ teaspoon salt**
- ⅛ teaspoon pepper**
- 2 cups chopped cherry tomatoes**
- 2 tablespoons chopped fresh basil**

1. In a large skillet, heat the oil over medium heat. Add the onion and cook until soft. Stir in the asparagus, salt, and pepper, and cook for 1 minute.
2. Add the tomatoes, partially cover, and cook until the asparagus is crisp-tender, 3 to 5 minutes. Stir in the basil and serve hot.

MAKES 4 SERVINGS

Asparagus & Yellow Tomatoes: Use yellow pear tomatoes instead of cherry tomatoes. Season with 2 teaspoons minced fresh tarragon instead of basil.

Okra with Tomatoes, Ginger & Basil

The ginger in this vibrant dish will convert even the biggest okra skeptic. Cooking small okra pods whole keeps them from becoming viscous and mushy.

2 tablespoons vegetable oil
2 cloves garlic, chopped
1 tablespoon chopped fresh ginger
1 shallot, chopped
¼ teaspoon red pepper flakes
1 pound small fresh okra, untrimmed
1½ cups yellow grape tomatoes, halved
½ cup loosely packed fresh basil leaves
Coarse salt and black pepper

1. In a heavy skillet, combine the oil, garlic, ginger, shallot, and pepper flakes, and cook over medium heat, stirring, for 1 minute.
2. Add the okra and cook, covered, until just tender, about 10 minutes.
3. Add the tomatoes and cook for 1 minute. Remove from the heat and stir in the basil. Season with salt and black pepper to taste.

MAKES 6 SERVINGS

Sautéed Russian Kale with Bacon

Russian kale has flatter leaves than regular kale, and the stems and veins are reddish or purple.

- 1 pound Russian kale, tough stems removed**
- 3 slices bacon, cut crosswise into ¼-inch pieces**
- 1 large red onion, finely chopped**
- 4 cloves garlic, minced**
- ¼ teaspoon red pepper flakes**
- 1 cup water**
- ½ teaspoon salt**
- ¼ teaspoon black pepper**

1. In a large steamer, cook the kale (in batches if necessary) until wilted, about 3 minutes. Set the kale aside.
2. In a large skillet, cook the bacon over medium heat until crisp. With a slotted spoon, transfer the bacon to paper towels.
3. Add the onion and garlic to the pan, and cook until the onion is soft, about 7 minutes. Stir in the red pepper flakes.
4. Add the kale, bacon, water, salt, and black pepper. Cook until the kale is tender, about 4 minutes.

MAKES 4 SERVINGS

Yukon Gold Potatoes & Spinach

Just a small amount of bacon (and bacon fat) contributes big flavor to this potato side dish.

- 1 slice bacon**
- 1 tablespoon olive oil**
- 1½ pounds Yukon Gold potatoes, peeled, halved lengthwise, and thinly sliced crosswise**
- 2 cloves garlic, minced**
- 4 cups baby spinach leaves**
- 1 tablespoon red wine vinegar**
- Salt and pepper**

1. In a large skillet, cook the bacon over medium heat until crisp. Drain the bacon on paper towels.
2. Add the olive oil to the bacon drippings in the pan and heat briefly. Add the potato slices and cook over medium heat, turning once, until the potatoes are tender, 10 to 15 minutes.
3. Add the garlic and spinach, a handful at a time, and cook just until the spinach is wilted, 2 to 3 minutes.
4. Crumble the bacon and add it to the pan. Stir in the vinegar. Season with salt and pepper to taste.

MAKES 4 SERVINGS