Swiss Chard

Swiss chard is a vegetable that is part of the chenopod family, which includes beets, spinach, chards, and quinoa. It has over 700% of your RDA (Recommended Daily Allowance) for vitamin K, over 100% RDA of beta-carotene (vitamin A) and over 50% RDA of vitamin C – all in just a one cup serving. It also contains magnesium, manganese, potassium, iron, vitamin E, B1, B2, B3, B5, B6, folate, zinc, calcium, copper, fiber tryptophan, biotin, and phosphorus – and let’s not leave out protein and selenium!

Preserving and Storing Swiss Chard: When you get your Chard home, wrap it in a damp paper towel and put it in the crisper drawer of your refrigerator. If you’ve got more than you can handle you can freeze Chard leaves just like any other greens. Blanch in boiling water for 1 minute, then submerge in ice water to stop the cooking. Drain, pack into freezer bags, and squeeze all the air out and place flat in the freezer. But what to do with those stems? You can use them like celery (try smearing cream cheese on them or dip them in a veggie dip!) Or try pickling them! I’ve included the recipe below! You can either can them for extended shelf life or they will last about a month in the fridge!

Pickled Chard Stems

Makes two pint jars

- 2 large bunches chard stems (leaves removed)
- 1 cup rice wine vinegar (at least 5% acidity if canning)
- 1/2 cup white vinegar (at least 5% acidity if canning)
- 1/2 cup filtered water
- 1/4 cup sugar
- 2 tbsp pickling salt
- 1/4 tsp coriander seed
- 1/4 tsp fennel seed
- 1/4 tsp black peppercorn
- 1/4 tsp yellow mustard seed

If canning, prepare canner, jars and lids.

Scrub chard stems, trim the ends, and slice any bits of leaf off of the edges with a sharp knife. Slice into batons, the height of your jar minus 1/2-inch for headspace. Slice larger stems in half, or in thirds, lengthwise, if needed, such that each pickle is approximately the same size. Combine vinegar, water, sugar, salt and spices in a small saucepan and bring to a boil, stirring to dissolve sugar and salt. Stack chard stems into hot, sterilized jars and cover with brine, leaving 1/2-inch headspace. Wipe rim, affix lid and process in a boiling water bath for 10 minutes (alternatively, you can store these pickles in the fridge for about 1 month).
**Sautéed Swish Chard with Bacon**

- Olive oil, for pan
- 1 cup bacon, cut into 1/4-inch dice
- 2 cloves garlic, smashed
- Pinch crushed red pepper flakes
- 1 bunch Swiss chard, stems removed and cut into 1/2-inch lengths, leaves cut into 1 1/2-inch lengths
- 1/2 cup chicken or vegetable stock
- Kosher salt

Coat a large sauté pan lightly with olive oil and add the diced bacon, garlic, and crushed red pepper. Bring the pan to medium-high heat. When the garlic has turned a lovely golden brown, remove from the pan and discard. At this point the bacon should start to become brown and crispy. Add the Swiss chard stems and the stock and cook until the stock has mostly evaporated. Add the Swiss chard leaves and sauté until they are wilted. Season with salt.

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**Creamy Swiss Chard**

- 2 bunches, about 2 pounds, Swiss chard, white ribbed or a mixture of colors (rainbow, red, yellow)
- 3 or 4 slices bacon, diced
- 1 clove garlic, mashed and finely minced
- 1/4 to 1/2 cup finely chopped red onion
- 2 tablespoons butter
- 2 tablespoons flour
- 1 cup half-and-half or whole milk
- pinch nutmeg
- salt and pepper, to taste

Wash chard and cut off thicker stems. Thinly slice the stems and chop leaves into 1/2- to 1-inch pieces. Steam or boil the stems for about 5 minutes, then add chard and cook until wilted, about 4 minutes longer. Drain well, squeezing out excess moisture if necessary.

In a medium saucepan over medium heat, cook the diced bacon until crisp; remove and set aside. Add onion and garlic and cook until onion is tender. Stir in the cooked drained chard and the reserved bacon; set aside.
In a saucepan over medium heat, melt butter. Stir in the flour until smooth and bubbly. Add the half-and-half or milk and nutmeg. Cook, stirring, until smooth and thickened. Add salt and pepper, to taste.

Add about 1/2 of the sauce to the chard, stirring to blend. Stir in more or all of the remaining sauce mixture, as desired.