



Spring Inspired Dishes

Spring is a wonderful time of year. The earth is awakening. The bare branches are bursting with green buds, the birds are busily singing while they build their nest and the bare earth is bring forth the first harvest of beets, cabbage, chives, peas, and mustard greens. I feel so inspired and energized by all this amazing energy that spring brings. When I go to the garden and see this spring feast growing my heart swells and my mind begins to imagine all the good food I can prepare for family and friends. I would like to share with you all three recipes that I have worked on featuring springs bountiful harvest!

Beets are a favorite in the Greenfield home. Our boys have a deep love for these roots so I grow a lot of them. Beets can be an array of colors but my favorites are the golden and deep red beets. They are packed full of flavor and they are stunningly beautiful! My personal favorite spring veggie is Arugula. I love its pepper flavor. I remember my first time I ever enjoyed this leafy green. I was in my early 20's and I couldn't believe I had been denied this leafy green my whole life. Beets and arugula are a perfect marriage. Beets bring this earthy sweet flavor and the arugula brings a bitter and peppery flavor, creating an amazing explosion of flavors in this one bite appetizer.

Beet, Goat Cheese, and Arugula Pesto Bites

4 large beets
goat cheese
orange peel

Pesto

2 cups of pack arugula
1/4 cup pine nuts
1/4 cup parmesan cheese finely shredded
1/2 cup olive oil
4 cloves garlic minced
1/2 teaspoon salt

Remove stems from the beets. Don't peel the beets. Cook the beets in boiling water until tender. Allow the beets to cool completely. Now peel the beets (it is easier to peel beets after they are cooked). On a mandolin thinly cut the beets into rounds. If you do not have a mandolin cut the beets by hand. The mandolin creates a constant and even cut. The beets can be prepared 2 days in advance.

With a knife cut just the top lay of the orange peel off. Try to just get the orange part of the peel. The white part of the peel is very bitter and not very tasty. Once you have a bit of peel peeled julienne the peel. Reserve this for later.

In a skillet toast pine nuts. watch them carefully because they toast quickly.

In a food processor combine arugula, toasted pine nuts, garlic and salt. Pulse the ingredient until they are all finely chopped but not pureed. Next drizzle the olive oil in and pulse. Make sure not to emulsify the pesto.

Pour the pesto into a bowl and stir in shredded parmesan cheese. The pesto can be prepared 2 days in advance.

Assembly

I like to use a white plater for this appetizer because the colors really pop! First lay down the base of the appetizer which is the beet. Place a 1/2 in round of goat cheese on top of the beet. Create a small well in the cheese with your finger. Next dollop a 1/2 1 teaspoon of pesto into the cheese well (it is ok if it spills over). Finally garnish each appetizer with orange peel and serve!

Spring in the north west doesn't just bring a bounty to the garden but also to the ditches and forest. Asparagus is grown in gardens here but oddly enough it grows wild in ditches as well. It is a veggie that grows in abundance here and so a spring inspired dishes would be incomplete without asparagus. This is an entirely selfish recipe for me because there is one veggie that our boys truly dislike and that is asparagus. Tough luck my little buddies!

Mini Lemon and Asparagus Quiche

1 bunch of Asparagus tips.
2 tablespoons olive oil
4 large eggs
4 egg whites
1/4 cup raw whole milk (or milk of choice)
1 lemon zest
1/3 cup parmesan cheese finely grated
salt to taste

Pre heat oven to 375o F.

Grease muffin tin.

In a pan sauté asparagus in olive oil until tender (34 minutes).

Whisk eggs, egg whites, milk, salt, and lemon zest. Stir in grated cheese. Poor this mixture into muffin pan making sure to only fill them halfway. Place three asparagus tips into each individual quiche.

Bake until the quiches are well risen and set in the middle. This should take about 20-25 minutes. Allow the quiche to cool about 5 minutes. You can serve them warm or cooled.

One of the prettiest spring veggies in my opinion is the pea vine. Its beautiful fluttery leaves and curly fingers holding tight to the trellis makes it thing that you just have to look at and appreciate. Not only are they beautiful to look at but they have a very versatile sweet and tender fruit. One of my favorite way to prepare peas is to make a dip that I like to serve to friends and put in my boys lunch boxes.

Spring Mint Pea Dip

2 cups fresh or frozen peas (thawed)
1/4 parmesan cheese grated
2 tablespoons olive oil
1 2 cloves garlic
1/8 cup fresh mint leaves
1 Tablespoon lemon juice
1/2 teaspoon salt

In a pot boil 4 cups of water and cook peas. If you are using fresh peas cook for 4 minutes. If you are using frozen peas cook for 10 minutes. Drain peas and allow them to cool to room temperature.

In a food processor combine peas, garlic, mint, lemon juice, and salt. Pulse food processor until desired constancy. Drizzle oil into food processor and pulse a couple times until it is blended.

Poor the ingredients into a bowl and then stir in the parmesan cheese. Garnish with a spring of mint and a drizzle of olive oil.

Serve dip with an array of fresh veggies.

Spring is busting and the seems and I hope that these recipes inspire you to see the harvest around you. Spring brings a wonderful pallet of veggies that can produce a true masterpiece in the kitchen. So surprise your family and friends with these easy, fun and fresh dishes.