

FALL HARVEST SALAD

adapted from thecollegehousewife.com

1 sweet potato, 1/2-in diced	1/2 c dried cranberries
4 Tbsp olive oil, divided	1/2 c blue cheese crumbles
salt and pepper	1/2 c chopped pecans
4 tsp minced rosemary, divided	2 Tbsp apple cider vinegar
8 c salad greens	1 Tbsp maple syrup
8 oz bacon, cooked, chopped	2 tsp dijon mustard
1 crisp fresh apple, sliced	2 tsp minced garlic

1. Preheat oven to 400°F. Add sweet potato to sheet pan and drizzle with ~1 Tbsp olive oil. Season with salt, pepper, and half the minced rosemary. Mix and bake 20-25 minutes, turning once halfway through. Set aside to cool.
2. In a small bowl, whisk together 3 Tbsp olive oil, apple cider vinegar, maple syrup, dijon mustard, garlic, remaining rosemary, and salt and pepper to taste. Transfer to an airtight jar and refrigerate until serving.
3. In a large salad bowl, arrange greens evenly. Top with bacon, apples, dried cranberries, blue cheese crumbles, chopped pecans, and sweet potato.
4. Drizzle salad with dressing and toss to combine. Serve immediately.

CHICKEN IN BUTTERNUT SQUASH MUSHROOM CREAM SAUCE

Adapted from servingdumplings.com	1/2 butternut squash, cubed
4 chicken breast filets	1 small onion, finely chopped
1 tsp salt	3 cloves garlic, minced
1 tsp black pepper	8 sage leaves, torn
1 tsp paprika	1 1/4 c chicken broth
2 Tbsp olive oil, divided	3/4 c cream 20% fat
1/2 lb chestnut mushrooms, chopped	1 tsp white miso paste
2 Tbsp unsalted butter	1 oz grated parmesan

1. Season chicken breasts with salt, pepper, and paprika.
2. Heat 1 Tbsp oil in a large skillet over high. Add mushrooms and saute until crispy and golden brown. Remove from skillet.
3. Add 1 Tbsp oil and 1 Tbsp butter. Add chicken and cook over medium high, about 5-8 minutes per side until fully cooked. Remove from skillet.
4. Add squash and cook 5 minutes until browned and tender. Stir in butter and add onion, garlic and sage. Continue cooking 2 minutes, stirring frequently.
5. Pour in broth, stir. Bring to boil, reduce heat, and simmer 2-3 minutes.
6. Add cream, then stir in white miso paste and grated parmesan. Keep stirring until miso is incorporated. Add mushrooms and chicken. Simmer 3 minutes or until chicken is heated through.



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Leafy Greens: Store leafy greens in the fridge in a perforated plastic bag. If you chop and wash ahead of time, spin the leaves dry before putting back in the bag with a dry paper towel to absorb moisture. Refresh as needed by plunging them in ice water 15-20 minutes.

Fall Squash: Store all fall squash in a cool, dry, dark place at around 50-70 degrees. They get sweeter in storage as the starch converts to sugar. Once cut, wrap in plastic and refrigerate for up to a week.

Apples: Store apples in a bag in your refrigerator. Keep in mind that apples are prone to absorb the odors of the produce around them, so don't place them close to onions or potatoes.

Sweet Potato: Store at room temperature. Refrigeration will cause them to harden and blacken when cooked. Check weekly and use any that may soften, most will keep for weeks or months.

Pears: There is no "right" time to eat a pear but you can tell ripeness by lightly squeezing. If you don't know what ripeness you like, experiment and eat them at all the stages of green to yellow! To speed up ripening, put pears in a closed paper bag with an already-ripe apple or banana. Check daily. To slow down ripening, refrigerate.

More than a Promise

We are witnessing an ecological miracle. The organic farming systems we have employed are creating a solar powered habitat where microbes, plants, insects, animals, and people coexist. Each year is better than the last. As farmers, we have many tools and methods to rear the animals and raise the crops in a systematic and efficient manner. As certified organic farmers, the tools we have are limited for good reason, and our methods must be approved by a third party certifier. Our farm, and records, must be inspected annually, if not more often. This month we are due for our inspection.

The Kentucky Department of Agriculture (KDA) is accredited to administer the USDA National Organic Program Regulations. KDA staff has gone through rigorous trainings to fully understand the regulations so that they can verify compliance of the operations they certify. The USDA audits their records and methodology with great scrutiny to uphold the integrity of the Organic seal. We submit an “organic system plan” each year to KDA staff, and they review it for compliance as well as completeness. We must inform them of what crops we plan to grow, how many of each kind of animals we care for, how we start transplants, how we manage pests while promoting diversity, and countless other parameters spelled out in the regulations. In the coming weeks, KDA will send an inspector out to look at our records, see that the animals are healthy and well cared for, watch how we harvest the crops, and talk to our team members to see if we have trained them in the rigors of organic integrity.

The inspector will arrive with a multi-page checklist of things to verify. Some inspectors like to go over the records with a fine tooth comb before driving and walking around to see the fields and animals; others look around first. Either way, we must be prepared to show them that we have an organic certificate for every seed we planted and every speck of feed we gave our animals. In fact, we must have certificates for every transaction with suppliers and processors that verifies their compliance with the regulation. We not only can show them the “no spray” signs the Department of Transportation put on the highway, but letters and email conversations with the neighbors indicating they are aware of our need for no contaminants of theirs disrupting our habitats.

Then there’s the comprehensive audit trail. The inspector will pick out one item we sell and ask to see all the documentation to prove that it is organic and that we grew it. Let’s take eggs for this example. We have to show them how many hens we have and how we came about them, then how much feed we have fed them and from whence it came, how many eggs we gathered and when, and how many eggs

we have sold, and where. If any one of the numbers seems out of line, the inspector will dig deeper to identify the discrepancy. All this is to verify we are not sneaking in contraband eggs and calling them organic. They can pick any one of the hundreds of crop varieties we grow, so we keep lots of records, not knowing which one they choose to audit. We gather and keep all these records for business management purposes—it’s just packaging them for the inspector that is a bit time consuming. Assembling all these documents in the midst of our busy daily operations is challenging, but it’s routine at this point.

If you hear a farmer say that getting certified is too expensive, that is bogus. KDA only charges \$500 for crops, or \$750 to include livestock, to become certified. Then the USDA offers a 75% cost-share rebate, to incentivize farmers to transition. If you hear a farmer say they don’t want to have to keep all those records to be certified, they should, because it makes for good business. If you hear farmers say they “farm organically, but are not certified,” that is really difficult to achieve. We have to refer to the regulations often to be sure we are making sound decisions, and the annual plan review and inspections are very informative. It is hard for a farmer to determine if they are following the letter of the law without having the plan review and inspections as supports. If you hear a farmer say they use “no spray,” good for them, but you still have no idea about fungicide treated seeds, systemic soil drenches, GMO seed technology, and the list goes on.

When we began our transition to organic certification, we thought several aspects of the regulations seemed onerous, but the restrictions held our feet to the fire and we learned to live within them. By doing so, the bioremediation of past chemical use began, and our little corner of the ecosystem began to heal itself. We were inspired to spur on this healing every way we could. Now, the microbial diversity has improved, we no longer have pest outbreaks that need to be addressed, and soil building through livestock production drives our crop fertility to perfection. When a farmer says they are certified organic, it is not just a promise to eliminate toxins in food production; it helps create ecologically sound farming systems. And we have the documents and third-party audit process to verify it. — Mac Stone

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organic, pasture-raised Thanksgiving turkey!**

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