

SPRING COUSCOUS SALAD WITH FETA VINAIGRETTE

Adapted from somethingnutritiousblog.com

2 c pearl couscous, dry	Dressing:
1 bunch asparagus, in 1" pieces	¼ c olive oil
2 c frozen or fresh peas	4 oz crumbled feta cheese
⅓ c shelled pistachios, chopped	juice from ½ lemon
handful parsley	2 tsp lemon zest
olive oil	2 tsp honey
microgreens	1 tsp Dijon mustard
	½ tsp italian seasoning
	salt and pepper

1. Cook couscous according to package instructions. Fluff with fork and season lightly with salt.
2. Heat drizzle of olive oil in skillet over medium heat. Add asparagus and saute for 5 minutes on medium heat. Add peas and cook together 5-6 minutes.
3. Mash feta cheese in bowl, then add the other dressing ingredients. Mix well.
4. Add couscous to large bowl and mix with cooked veggies, chopped pistachios, and chopped parsley.
5. Toss with dressing and adjust salt and pepper to taste. Garnish with microgreens to serve. Serve cold, warm or at room temperature.

ROASTED ASPARAGUS WITH BURRATA

Adapted from twopeasintheirpod.com

1½ lb asparagus, woody ends discarded	Dressing:
1 Tbsp olive oil	2 Tbsp olive oil
salt and pepper	1 ½ Tbsp fresh lemon juice
4 c arugula	½ Tbsp minced shallot
8 oz burrata	½ tsp honey
¼ c chopped pistachios	½ tsp Dijon mustard
1 Tbsp chopped mint	1 small garlic clove, minced
honey	salt and pepper

1. Preheat oven to 400F.
2. Place asparagus spears on large baking sheet and drizzle with olive oil. Toss to coat and season with salt and pepper. Roast 10-15 minutes or until asparagus is tender but still crisp.
3. While asparagus roasts, whisk together oil, lemon juice, shallot, honey, mustard, garlic, salt, and pepper.
4. Place arugula on a large platter. Drizzle with 2 Tbsp of dressing and toss.
5. Top arugula with roasted asparagus. Break apart burrata and arrange it around the arugula and asparagus. Drizzle with remaining dressing. Garnish with pistachios, mint, and a drizzle of honey. Serve.



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Rhubarb: Technically a vegetable, not a fruit, rhubarb stalks may have green and/or pink coloration when ready to eat. Store stalks in a plastic bag and keep in the crisper drawer of the refrigerator up to one week. Try it pickled, made into jam, frozen, or used fresh.

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.

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.

Mushrooms: Storing mushrooms in plastic bags or containers can cause discoloration, mold, or an undesirable texture. Refrigerate mushrooms in paper bag with paper towel inside to absorb moisture.

Asparagus: Best eaten as fresh as possible. To store, stand asparagus in jar with about 1 inch of water, making sure ends are sitting in the water. Loosely cover with a plastic bag and refrigerate up to one week.

Know Who Your Friends Are

With our first little warm spell, it'll be bug season before we know it. Most of you probably wish we could skip bug season altogether. For better or for worse, teeny tiny insects can have a big impact on the world around them. As organic farmers we have learned the value of making close observations of the wildly diverse insect populations that call Elmwood Stock Farm home, and gained a tremendous amount of respect for the ecological niche each and every one has capitalized on to do so.

Insects are only pests to farmers and gardeners when they are not kept in check and overpopulate their little patch of earth. Aphids, for example, are no bigger than a sesame seed, so a few of the little sap suckers on a tomato plant can't really do much harm. They are quite prolific at reproduction however, so a few can become a few thousand in a few hot humid days, and collectively become a big problem. Thousands of little piercing proboscises not only suck nutrients out of the leaves and stems, they vector in plant diseases. One option to prevent these outbreaks is to scout the plants on a daily basis, and when some predetermined threshold number of aphids/plant is reached, a farmer can don their Tyvek suit and full-face respirator and proceed to spray some toxic synthetic chemical over and under all the leaves to annihilate each and every one. This is the accepted norm in commercial vegetable cropping circles and is the accepted approach to the situation by scientists at government-supported institutions of higher education across the country.

Some farmers worry about accurately predicting the threshold properly, or are lax in their scouting time and attention, so they just spray every week or ten days to be sure. This is the simplest and easiest way to "control" pests and diseases, so these weekly sprays are often cocktails for the pest and disease du jour, just to take care of any and all villains lurking about. If you were to walk down the rows in a field managed this way (after the re-entry interval period has passed, naturally, because each chemical comes with a chart telling the sprayer how much time should pass before a human can set foot in the field again) zero insects would show up on a scouting report. Problem solved.

This approach to food production is fraught with false hope and rife with problems. These chemicals are extremely toxic to humans, not just the pests. Do you want your food farmer exposing themselves, and part of the Elkhorn Creek watershed, to such? Do you want to wonder if your food farmer actually waited the "safe" number of days required before picking and selling you your food? What happens to a postage stamp sized piece of earth that is suddenly denuded of life of any kind? How will Mother Nature respond? By mutating and building resistance to the chemical as a survival mechanism for the species who used to live there. The

pesticides cause Mother Nature to devise bigger and badder insects, which cause the companies to devise bigger and badder pesticides—it's a war that can't be won.

Well as only Mother Nature would have it, some species of insects exploit every miniscule little slot in the balance of power on the planet, so as organic farmers, we use a fundamentally different approach to aphid management. The inherent ability of plants to bio-remediate their environment have cleared away the residual chemical toxins after two decades of clean farming. This has allowed several species of wasps to re-inhabit Elmwood Stock Farm. These are not the stinging pests feared by all; these are teeny tiny critters so small, an adult female can use her ovipositor to pierce the shell of the aphid and deposit her eggs within. In a mere day or two, the braconid wasp egg hatches and the emerging larva feeds on the aphid until it tunnels out of the aphid shell to become an adult. This parasitoid will move on to parasitize countless other aphids. So we do lots of scouting, watching the aphid population grow, and then begin seeing the aphid mummies appear, evidence of our little friends, secretly eliminating our potential pest outbreak. It may be days before humans can enter a chemical-laden field, but it took years before it was safe for these little wasps to move back home. We provide food for them in the form of flowers, and overwintering habitat in our pastures and fencerows. No Tyvek suit or full-face respirator needed with our pest management.

A similarly small flying insect is no friend at all. The Spotted Wing Drosophila is the Southeast Asian cousin of the Common American fruit fly (aka Drosophila melanogaster) often seen in your kitchen when you discover over-ripe bananas at the bottom of your fruit bowl. The "spotted wing" version of the fruit fly is the arch nemesis to all small fruit farmers. It seems these exotic invasive intruders have ovipositors with a saw tooth edge (not a simple spear shape like the American ones have), allowing her to force her way into firm, healthy fruit tissue to deposit her eggs. As we excitedly anticipate tasting the year's first berries, we now have to worry about spotted wings moving in to destroy them. This is a relatively new problem. Kind of like raccoons go after the sweet corn the day before we do, these tiny insects harm the fruit as the skin softens during ripening, and if that wasn't pesky enough, the eggs hatch quickly too. There are no chemical sprays available in the armory of conventional farmers to control them because the ones that "control" them have do-not-eat periods that are longer than the ripening time. If you waited until they were safe to harvest, they'd be overripe anyway. What we do is harvest the good ones daily to get them before the spotted wing does.

All you home gardeners should know how to tell friend from foe: we like Green Lacewings, Syrphid or Robber flies, and of course Lady Bird Beetle larvae. If you are not a gardener, you can eat in peace because we have taken the long view of food production by allowing Mother Nature to keep pestilence in check, since she does it much better than the pesticide companies. — Mac Stone