

KALE, ASPARAGUS, AND FAVA SHAKSHUKA

Adapted from snackingemily.com

2 Tbsp olive oil	½ c grated parmesan, divided
1 yellow onion, diced	¼ c fresh dill
8 cloves garlic, chopped	4 eggs
1 bunch kale, stems removed	1 tsp kosher salt
10 stalks asparagus, 1-2" pieces	pepper to taste
1 c shelled fava beans	toasted bread to serve

1. In a pan on medium heat, add olive oil and onion, sauteeing 5 minutes, stirring occasionally, until onions are translucent. Add garlic and cook another 3-5 minutes.
2. Chop kale into small pieces. Add kale to pan and cook about 5 minutes. Add asparagus and salt, stir, and cook for another 5 minutes. Add fava beans and dill and stir to combine. Sprinkle about half the parmesan over the greens.
3. Using a spoon, create 4 wells in the pan. Add a little bit of olive oil to each well, then crack one egg in each. Cover and cook 2-3 minutes for a runny yolk or 4-5 minutes for a jammy yolk. Uncover and remove from heat.
4. Serve directly out of the pan with slices of toasted bread.

RHUBARB OVERNIGHT OATS

Adapted from gettystewart.com

1/3 c large flake oats	¼ c water or orange juice
½ Tbsp ground flax seed	½ c sugar
⅛ tsp cinnamon	1 tsp cinnamon
¼ cup milk	1 tsp vanilla
¼ c greek yogurt	honey (optional)
4 c diced rhubarb	1 Tbsp hemp seeds (optional)

1. Mix oats, flax seed and 1/8 tsp cinnamon in jar.
2. In a large saucepan, bring rhubarb, water/orange juice, and sugar to boil. Reduce heat and simmer until rhubarb is tender, 6-8 minutes. Add 1 tsp cinnamon and remove from heat. Let cool.
3. Add milk, yogurt, and stewed rhubarb mixture. Mix well.
4. Taste and add honey as desired. Top with hemp seeds if desired.
5. Place in refrigerator overnight.
6. Enjoy! Keep in refrigerator up to 2 days.



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Rhubarb: Technically a vegetable, not a fruit, rhubarb stalks may have green and/or pink coloration—both are ready to go. 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, pies, or cobblers.

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.

Carrots, Radishes, Turnips: Remove the root from the greens if they are attached. Store in separate plastic bags in the fridge. Greens can be used as you would other leafy cooking greens, taking note of spicy or texture difference.

Strawberries: Refrigerate as soon as possible in an airtight container and they can last up to a week. To freeze, wash and remove tops, then place on parchment-lined baking sheet and freeze. Store in container up to a year.

Asparagus: Best eaten as fresh as possible, but to store, stand asparagus in jar with about 1 inch of water in refrigerator, making sure ends are in the water. Loosely cover with a plastic bag.

Bugs

Bugs may be on your mind right now more than usual, maybe one bug in particular. The Bourbon brood of cicadas have emerged from the ground, so you may see their holes, their husks, or their big red eyes staring at you. Cicadas leave our row crops alone, preferring to drink sap from tree roots, but their emergence makes a good opportunity to introduce our other insect friends and foes here on the farm.

It's hard to imagine how many thousand species of bugs there are that call Elmwood Stock Farm home. Only a handful would be considered pests, in that they show up in large numbers and wreak havoc on an otherwise-stable ecosystem. Monoculture farming creates unique environments, like a field of corn or rows of vegetable plants not normally found in the Kentucky landscape, so we have added to that insect diversity by adding new food choices for the bugs to choose from—free of chemicals, I might add. Even the bugs eat in peace, along with us humans.

Bugs come in three basic categories: sap suckers, leaf eaters, or egg inserters. Sap suckers, like aphids, cucumber beetles, stink bugs, or alfalfa weevils, use their trunk-like proboscis to pierce the stem of a plant to suck the sap to attain their nutrients. This damages the plant, but the added risk is that they might transmit plant diseases or viruses from previous plant encounters. By contrast, leaf eaters have strong jaws and/or sturdy lips with teeth. Think the little green cabbage looper (aka the very hungry caterpillar). Then egg inserters stick their ovipositor into a plant and deposit eggs, knowing when the larvae emerges from the egg, the plant will provide everything the little hatchlings will need for survival. Leaf miners, who leave little trails inside leaves, are a good example of egg inserters.

Bugs each have favorite foods. For example, flea beetles will make small holes in the kale, unless there are radish leaves about, in which case, the kale will go unscathed. In the spring, radishes are our barometer of how much flea-beetle pressure to expect that season. We have been known to plant “trap” crops like radish or mizuna to draw all the attention away from our “cash” crops. The tricky part is knowing how far away to plant them from each other, and when to physically destroy the trap crop, bugs and all, if it becomes too heavily infested.

For hungry cucumber beetles, whose favorite foods are cucumber, squash, zucchini, and melon, we have thin woven row covers we can put over the plants to keep the beetles out. Those covers may help pest numbers decline over time as the feeding/mating season is disrupted. But it is a lot of work for us to manage the covers, and they must come off when the plants start flowering so the bees can pollinate them to make fruits. Cucurbits have male and female flowers and if the pollinators do not transfer the pollen, no fruit will develop. The flowers are only open for one day apiece, so timing is everything. If the cucumber beetles are not

hurting the plants when they first go out, we can skip the row cover.

Conventional farmers just need to identify the creature, look at a chart for what to spray, and problem solved. As organic farmers, we have learned from our elders and entomologists about insects' life cycles. For example, under the organic regulations, we can apply Bt, a botanical solution that disrupts the digestive system of little green or red larvae that like broccoli and kale but has absolutely no impact on the adults or any other insects, which is why it is allowed for use in organics. Even an organic-approved substance like this is a last-resort tactic here.

Insectivores, or insects that eat other insects, also come in those three basic types. We welcome these insects to be our allies in the field, and in the past we've even purchased some to augment the homegrown population. One of the good suckers is called the assassin bug, which looks very similar to a stink bug. It can suck a caterpillar dry, leaving a leathery little carcass. Of the kind with jaws, the lady bug larvae and green lacewing larvae are both tiny but voracious aphid eaters. Aphids are a sucking pest of nearly every plant we grow, so they are a big help. There are hundreds of species of ground beetles that love to eat insect eggs and the like. Spiders may be the best of all.

The teeny, tiny braconid wasp family may be our most valuable mercenaries. They use their hair-like ovipositors to pierce the skin of an aphid or caterpillar and deposit their eggs inside. The eggs soon hatch into hungry, teeny, tiny larvae that eat the insides of the pests before burrowing out, effectively killing the pests. These wasps are so super sensitive to pesticides that it can take years before they can take up residence after toxins have been applied.

Once a farm is off the chemical treadmill, good things start to happen for the plants and for the bugs. Since we got our certified organic status 25 years ago, we have seen the number of pest outbreaks diminish and the beneficial insects flourish. We no longer see the effects of hair lice on our cattle. The Japanese Beetles stick to their preferred food, smartweed, leaving our corn silks and blackberries alone. By planting crops like sunflower and buckwheat (which have sticky nectar on the stem all season), the beneficials have a food source while waiting for their hosts to emerge. By eliminating all toxic chemicals from the system, the collective good guys keep the bullies off the playground. And by rotating crops, the plants develop a strong shield themselves.

So have a little fun, go out to the garden and see which friends and foes you find. Flip the leaves over, because most insects prefer the shade. Stand still and see if the teeny tiny wasps begin to move about. Diversify your lawn and see if your pests seem a little more manageable. Pick the bag worms off the evergreens. But do not think you are going to win any wars with toxic chemicals. You will just have to start all over building up your war chest of bug mercenaries.— Mac Stone