

Collard Greens

Collard greens have been cultivated for at least 2000 years and there is evidence of their use as far back as ancient Greek civilization.

Collards were one of the few vegetables that African-Americans were allowed to grow for themselves during enslavement and over the years, cooked greens recipes were passed down through generations and became a traditional food. Even after emancipation, collards remain a staple in African-American culture and southern cooking. [1]

A heartier green and member of the cabbage family, collard greens contain substantial amounts of vitamins K, and are rich sources of vitamin A, vitamin C, and manganese. They are also a moderate source of calcium and vitamin B6.

CULINARY TIPS

- Combine collard greens with water, meat, and spices, then simmer until tender (about 2 hours).
- Use cornbread to soak up the “pot likker”, the richly flavored broth left after cooking.
- Use as a sandwich wrap, in place of tortillas.

HOW TO STORE

Collards can be stored up to 10 days at a temperature just above freezing and at high humidity. In a home refrigerator, they will last closer to 3 days. In the freezer, they will store for months (blanch first).

WAYS TO PREPARE

- **African-American** – In the South, collards are typically cooked with smoked and salted meats, diced onions, vinegar, salt, and black pepper, white pepper, or crushed red pepper. Some cooks add a small amount of sugar.
- **East African** – Collards are called *Sukuma wiki* in Tanzania and Kenya. In East African cuisine, sukuma wiki are lightly sauteed in oil until tender, flavoured with onions and seasoned with salt, and served either as the main accompaniment or as a side dish with meat.

- **Zimbabwean** – In Zimbabwe, collards are called *mbida*. Mbida are normally wilted in boiling water before being fried and combined with sautéed onions and/or tomato. Some add beef, pork and other meat to the mix for a type of stew.
- **Portuguese** – *Caldo verde* is a Portuguese national favorite. It is made with collards, potatoes, and chorizo or linguica.
- **Kashmiri** – *Haak rus* is a soup of leaves cooked in water, salt and oil with spices (turmeric, coriander, fennel seed, cumin, fenugreek, chile powder, and ginger), eaten with rice.

[1] LATIBA Collard Greens museum.

SLOW-COOKED COLLARDS & “POTLIKKER”

Courtesy of Chef Jerome Grant, National Museum of African-American History and Culture

Serves 12

4 pounds collard greens
 1 tablespoon kosher salt
 1 teaspoon sugar
 2 cups finely diced onion
 1/4 cup finely minced garlic cloves (about 1 head)
 3 ham hocks (about 1 1/2 pounds)
 2 teaspoons crushed red pepper flakes
 2 fluid ounces apple cider vinegar
 1/2 fluid ounce Tabasco Hot Sauce
 Cornbread, for serving

Thoroughly wash and dry the collards and cut or tear the leaf from the stems. Cut the leaves to your desired size.

Fill a large pot with about 3 gallons of cold water. Add the salt, sugar, onions, garlic and ham hocks, then bring to a boil. Reduce to a simmer and cook for 20 minutes.

Add the collards, red pepper flakes, vinegar, and tabasco and cook until very soft, about 2 hours. Serve the greens in a large bowl with the potlikker, with plenty of cornbread on the side for dipping.