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This is Mariquita Farm's weekly *Ladybug Postcard*, our year round recipe newsletter, with notes by Andy, links to his larger articles ([Ladybug Letter](#)), announcements, and events.

Eating Turnips by Andy Griffin

Turnip roots are often considered “poverty food,” but that’s not the poor turnip’s fault. I remember my grandma Anna; “Eat your turnips,” she’d command. “To grow up big and strong you have to join the ‘Clean Plate Club.’”

I wasn’t crazy about turnips. “What’s wrong with growing up to be a skinny, limp-wristed, effete intellectual who reads existentialist tracts and makes a comfortable living criticizing the excesses of the world’s strongmen?” I wondered. But I’d open up my mouth and take another bite of steamed turnips anyway.



Grandma was hard headed. She was born in 1900 into an immigrant family from Denmark and her mother died when she was only five. My great grandfather, Marius, was often gone away to work for

days at a time so when she got a little older Anna was responsible to care for her two little sisters, cooking, cleaning and maintaining discipline. Danes ate a lot of root crops. Turnips are not hard to grow, and they keep for a long time in the ground, the root cellar, or the refrigerator.

True, my grandma grew up in Watsonville, so she could have grown [rapini](#) in her garden. Rapini, or broccoli raab, is simply a turnip variety appreciated

for its little “broccoli” florettes, but [rapini](#) was an “Italian” vegetable and Danes didn’t eat Catholic food. And yes, my grandmother could have grown “greasy greens,” in Watsonville; “greasy greens are simply a variety of turnip grown for their big, mustardy leaves, but greasy greens are Southern food and my grandma’s family was resolutely Baltic in

character. So grandma cooked turnip roots she pulled from the garden and she’d steam them for a long time until they got mushy.

My dad didn’t like turnips either. The Great Depression was only “Great” because it was bigger than the recession of 1918- 1919 and the depression of 1920-1921. My grandpa lost our orchard farm in ’21. Many people in our family got sick with tuberculosis and we had to sell the land to pay for the

sanitarium. My uncle told me there were many time our family didn’t have a dime in the cigar box but we always had plenty of food because we went to work on other people’s farms. When my father was a little boy my grandma would send him out along the highway to pick up the turnips from the roadside that had fallen from overloaded trucks that passed by. In an effort to maintain prices farmers hauled the crops they couldn’t sell for a profit to dumps and covered up the heaps of vegetables with lime to destroy them and there was a big vegetable dump near the Metz railroad siding outside of King City, where my family was living on a dairy ranch. I find that overcooking turnips brings out an unpleasant, mustardy flavor, but I think my dad hated turnips because they tasted of hard times.

What’s Planned for the Box This Week:

Baby [Carrots](#)

[Cilantro](#)

Purple Top [Turnips](#)

Loose [Spinach](#)

Calcot [Onions](#)

Winter Density [Lettuce](#)

Delicata [Squash](#)

[Collard Greens](#)

Baby [Leeks](#)

Nowadays I like turnips. Turnips are versatile; you can steam them like my grandma did, or add them to soups and stews, or shave them thin and serve raw, but I've learned to roast them. It's simple; cut the turnips in half, in quarters, or in eights, depending on the size of the roots, and tumble them in olive oil. Lay the pieces out in a single layer in a baking pan, salt lightly, and roast them at 350° until they're done. You can even throw in some other roots or chunks of onion or garlic cloves and make a tasty mixed vegetable side dish. Besides, when times get hard you can't eat the dime in the cigar box.

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Miso Vegetables & Tofu

(Adapted from Heidi at [101 Cookbooks](#))

A couple notes: This recipe makes more dressing than you'll need. But the leftover will keep refrigerated for a week or two. Have fun experimenting with different in-season ingredients wherever you are.

6 oz awase miso (or blend equal parts white & red miso)
1/4 cup sake
1/2 cup mirin
3 tablespoons sifted natural cane sugar
red pepper flakes or shichimi tōgarashi, a big pinch or 2
4 cups / 12 oz / 340 g bite-sized veggies (this week it could be: turnips, onions, leeks, collards, spinach, and or carrots. if you have a butternut squash kicking around peel that and bite size cut it up. the delicata is better for direct baking and eating in my opinion due to its ridges)
12 ounces / 340 g baked or grilled (or lightly pan-fried) firm tofu, cut into bite-sized pieces

Start the dressing first. Combine miso, sake, mirin, and sugar in a small saucepan. Bring just to a boil, dial down the heat and simmer gently for about 20 min., or until it thickens a bit. Toward the end, stir in the red pepper flakes, to taste. Remove from heat and allow to cool.

In the meantime, bring a pot of water to a boil. Salt the water and blanch the vegetables very briefly, just long enough to take the raw edge off, no more than a minute. Hard veggies first, then the leafies. Use your best judgment based on whatever vegetables you are using. Drain and immediately run under cold water to stop the cooking. Drain well, you want to try to get as much water off the vegetables as possible.

In a large serving bowl gently toss the vegetables until thoroughly coated with 1/3 cup / 80 ml of the miso dressing. Add the tofu and toss again. Taste and add more dressing if you like, just keep in mind, this particular dressing is quite strong and rich. Serve family-style or individually topped with a bit more shichimi tōgarashi or a sprinkling of red pepper flakes. Serves 4 - 6, plus leftover dressing.

Black-Eyed Peas with Turnips & Collards

(From Chef Jonathan Miller)

1 c black eyed peas (dried)
1 bunch turnips, peeled and diced
1/2 bunch collards
olive oil
1 onion, chopped
1 roasted red pepper (jarred is ok)
4 scallions, thinly sliced
3 T mayonnaise
cider vinegar

Pick through and rinse your black eyed peas, then put them in a pot with cold water to cover by at least 2 inches. Boil, reduce heat, add a little salt, and simmer until tender, about 30-45 minutes depending on the condition of the beans.

Meanwhile, saute the turnips in olive oil over high heat until softened and colored, about 8 minutes. Finish with a hit of salt, then transfer to a large bowl.

Cut stems off of the collards and chop the leaves small. Boil until tender, about 20-25 minutes. Drain well, pressing with a spoon to extract extra liquid, and add to the turnips. Saute the onion in some olive oil over high heat until nicely browned, about 7 minutes. Add a little salt, then transfer to the bowl with the collards. Dice the roasted pepper and add that to the bowl.

Drain the beans and add them to the bowl with the other vegetables, then add the scallions. Toss gently.

In a small bowl, whisk the mayonnaise with a few teaspoons of cider vinegar, then fold it into the vegetables with a little salt and pepper. Taste and adjust seasonings if necessary. Make more dressing if you prefer. Serve at room temperature, or chilled.



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