

wilted greens & bacon salad

BEAUTY, LOVE & GRUB

SERVES 2-4

If there is one recipe that makes me miss my maternal grandparents, it's this one. As a child, I feel like we had fresh lettuce from my grandfather's garden every day during summer months. I remember washing the lettuce and wondering how many critters would surface in the water. My grandmother made a version of this recipe, as did my mom, but it's one of those things that no one ever wrote down. Until now. Nannie Redden used apple cider vinegar and good old-fashioned cane sugar in the dressing, so I've modified it a bit and put pencil to paper to share it with the world. It's not the prettiest salad, but I promise, it makes up for it, and then some, on taste.

1 head	fresh garden/farmer's market lettuce*, core and leafless stems removed
1/4 cup	fresh chives, minced (can add more to taste)
4 slices	thickly cut bacon (about 8 slices if thinner cut)
1/4 cup	reserved bacon grease
1/3 cup	tap water
1/4 cup	white wine vinegar
2 1/2 tablespoons	honey
1/2 teaspoon	kosher salt
to taste	freshly ground black pepper

*During late spring and summer months, the farmer's market is brimming with heads of fresh lettuce. What kind you choose almost doesn't matter, and during winter months, you can even use baby spinach from the grocery store to enjoy this delightful starter or side.

Wash and dry the lettuce well. I like to use a salad spinner for drying. Place in a large glass or metal bowl. Mince the chives and add to the lettuce. Set aside. In a large non-stick skillet over medium to medium-high heat, fry the bacon until crispy, turning and being careful not to burn it. Cooking time will vary by thickness, but count on 3-4 minutes per side for thinly sliced bacon. Once crispy, remove bacon from pan and place on a plate lined with a paper towel. Allow the bacon grease to cool slightly in the pan and carefully pour into a heat-resistant bowl or cup.

To the skillet, add 1/4 cup of the reserved bacon grease, water, vinegar, honey, kosher salt, and pepper. Over high heat, stirring constantly, bring to a boil and allow to boil for 30 seconds. Remove from heat and carefully pour over the lettuce and chives. Toss well for a minute or so, coating all of the lettuce, until it wilts. Divide evenly into bowls, pouring some dressing into each bowl. Crumble bacon over lettuce and serve immediately.

NOTES: You can add fresh herbs as desired. I typically use one head of lettuce to serve two people, but it could easily serve four as a smaller side.

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