

These are a few of my favorite

Greens

The Green Hornet & Kato, the green Power Ranger, fried green tomatoes, behind the green door, dandelion greens, Mr. Green Jeans, my green cloak of elfin kind, candied southern greens with bleu cheese Brulee, The Green Goblin, Greenday (only in the beginning), green Jell-O, Dipsy (the green teletubbie), salad Verde, haricot vert, the scary green face of the wicked witch from the wizard of oz, wasabi, green room, green grass & high tides, and green M & M's....honorable mention: Lou Ferrigno and Oscar the Grouch.

- Chef John





find your

Flavor

It's Easy Being Green

HERBS, GREENS, NATURE... AND A LITTLE MUSIC VIBE TO BOOT

WRITTEN BY JOHN SCHOPP

Spring is upon us, and for some, not a minute too soon. As the smell of worms and ozone fills the air, my heart suggests that it may be safe to start planning some of those activities that make us feel energized and re-engaged in the human race. Nope, I am not talking about 5K runs, trips to the beach (although those are always nice) or even changing your closets from winter to spring. I am talking about planting an herb garden... small gatherings of interesting people enjoying food and beverage around an open pit fire... and the upcoming Victor Wooten's Bass/Nature Camp in Nashville, Tennessee. (More on this a little later.)

The plan was to write an article about "green" restaurants but there's lots of that out there now. Instead I find my thoughts drifting closer to home and my own "green" garden space. Heaven on earth!

There is absolutely no excuse why anybody reading this should not have their own herb garden, the perfect green project. The scale and design of your garden is only limited to your imagination. For those of you that do not have much yard do not be discouraged. I have seen very elaborate and functional herb gardens grown in containers on concrete, hanging from the sides of buildings, rooftops, fencerows, and even in old abandoned cars. Herbs are super easy to grow. For the most part herbs enjoy abuse and neglect so not much special skill needed there. They come in a vast variety of colors, flavors and aromas. All of them flower (bonus) and most of the seeds & flowers taste good (double bonus). Of the perennial herbs that thrive in our region you can choose from a large selection of rosemary, lavender, thyme, sage, oregano, fennel (and anise), chamomile, parsley, chives, mints and balms. The annuals include dozens of basil, lemon grass, dill, nasturtiums, violets, dandelion, cilantro and arugula.

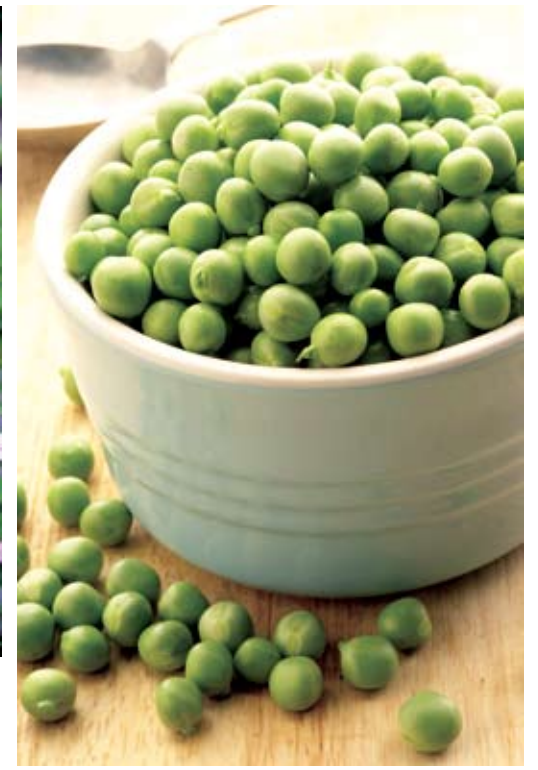
Visit a nursery, buy some flats of herbs and go put your hands in the cool damp ground. You may find by the end of the day, you have just experienced one of the best days of the year!

After a hard days work in your own personal green space, it's time to relax. An open pit fire or grill coupled with good food is a natural catalyst for great conversation with family or some of those interesting people you may want to get to know better. If interesting people don't seem to be within your scope of friends, you can always look for REALLY boring, stale personalities to enhance the normalness of your peer group. With that said, always try to appreciate normality as uniqueness in itself.



John Schopp, owner of Center Stage Catering and Edible Vibe, is a new writer for Bella. (Mainly because we are his biggest fans, and believe he can do no wrong.) He and his beautiful family live (outside the box) in Rocky Mount, where rockstar catering is created, and the edible vibes are delectable! www.centerstagefood.com

more...
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Victor Wooten

For those of you that do not know Victor Wooten ... here's your introduction. He is considered to be one of the most influential bass players of our time. In addition to his solo ventures, which are all uniquely fabulous, he is also a member of the five time Grammy award winning super group Bela Fleck and the Flecktones. In his spare time (joke) he and his fabulous wife, Holly, have been developing their very own green space, Victor Wooten's Bass/Nature Camp in Tennessee. The Camp is located about an hour outside of Nashville and consists of almost 150 acres of woods and fields in a secluded spot along the beautiful Duck River. Victor seems to always be surrounded by some of the most talented, open and giving people in the world. Drawing inspiration from this unique resource, he and Holly are creating 'a work in progress' utopia where nature, music, martial arts, philosophy and life energies unite in an ever evolving forum of participation. I have the privileged opportunity to be a part of this unique green experience. About three or four times a year I load up the kitchen truck and head south. My mission: Prepare healthy 'from scratch' food for the 80+ bass/nature campers three times a day for a week. The adventure,

from a cook's point of view, is always enriching, excruciatingly challenging, hectic-paced and some of the most rewarding fun a culinary professional could ask for.

The campers come to experience Vic as a 'teacher', hoping to delve a trick or two into the insights of becoming a world-renowned musician. What Victor exposes them to, in addition to a multitude of musical techniques, philosophies and exercises, is the idea that music and nature are actually interconnected. Campers reconnect with the 'simple' obvious aspects of living and communicating with each other, as well as the rest of the World. My favorite 'green element' at camp is the fact that everyone washes their own dishes, with environmentally friendly soap of course. Check out VictorWooten.com and click on VIX Camps for more on this amazing experience.

Whether you actually travel to a green space location or create one in your own backyard don't pass up the opportunity to connect with the REAL WORLD, the graphics are amazing.

Here are 4 recipes to help inspire a theme... all share likeness with the color **green!**

Cook with courage, passion and purpose...the rest will follow.

Love,
Chef John

CANDIED SOUTHERN GREENS WITH BRULEED BLEU CHEESE

(This is one of my wife's fav's!) O.k., I know that 4 of the 6 ingredients are not too healthy, but the greens are excellent for you!

- 1 lb fresh kale, mustard and or collard greens
- 4 ounces of butter (yep that's right)
- 1 ounce extra virgin olive oil
- ½ cup sugar of choice (I like pure maple sugar or vanilla infused sugar)
- 4 ounces bleu cheese
- 1 medium sweet onion sliced (for garnish)

In a large cast iron skillet melt the butter. Layer the greens with sugar and olive oil as they cook down. Top with bleu cheese and broil until melted. Garnish with raw onion. Hit the treadmill for an extra mile tomorrow.

MOJITO MILKSHAKES

- 2 scoops of Homestead Creamery vanilla ice cream
- 1 cup of Homestead Creamery milk
- 2 ounces of Rum
- 1 ounce of key lime juice
- 20 or so fresh mint leaves (Substitute 1 teaspoon mint extract if you don't like mint leaves in your teeth!)

Put it all in a blender and blend until smooth.

CHOCOLATE BASIL MARTINIS

This is a great way to use the lovely essential oils in your left over basil stems.

- 10 to 15 basil stems
- 1 cup sugar
- 1 cup water
- 1 tablespoon pure cocoa
- 2 ounces good vodka (chilled)
- 1 ounce chocolate liquor
- 1 sprig chocolate basil to garnish
- Powdered sugar to garnish

Make simple syrup by bringing water and sugar to boil. Remove syrup from heat and drop in basil stems (and 1 T pure cocoa). Make martini with vodka, chocolate liquor and a little drizzle of the basil cocoa syrup. Garnish with chocolate basil and dust with powdered sugar.

CHILLED SPANISH GREEN PEA & ALMOND BISQUE WITH TOASTED MANCHEGO CRISP

- 2 cups fresh spring peas (Substitute frozen if not available)
- 1 med sweet onion (diced)
- ¼ cup raw almond
- 2 cup spring water (Substitute chicken stock if not vegetarian)
- ½ cup extra virgin olive oil
- Salt/pepper to taste (Fresh mint or basil are nice also, add just before the puree)

In a heavy bottom sauce pan sweat the onion in the olive oil. Add the peas, almonds and water. Bring to a simmer and puree with a hand held emulsion blender. Salt and pepper to taste.

MANCHEGO CRISP

Place a small pile of shredded cheese on a baking sheet and bake until golden brown. (You need to lift them off the sheet before these set.)