

Strawberry-Rhubarb Spinach Salad

from In Our Grandmothers' Kitchens

Ingredients:

for the strawberry vinegar:

strawberries (don't use too many at a time or this will take forever)
enough distilled white vinegar to cover them
equal amounts of sugar and water

for the salad:

1 cup chopped rhubarb
1 tablespoon sugar
1 tablespoon strawberry vinegar
salt and pepper to taste
2 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil
4 cups spinach
toasted pecans to taste
feta cheese to taste

Instructions:

The day before you want to eat your salad (or any time up to a year before!) start the vinegar. Place the berries in a non-aluminum pan. (A porcelain dish is great.) Cover them with the vinegar, and leave them to soak, covered, overnight. If you forget them for a day and wait 2 nights, they will still be fine. The next day (or the day after that), gently strain the juice through cheesecloth. You may squeeze the berries a little, but don't overdo; letting the juice drip out on its own is best.

Measure the juice. Then measure a little under 1-1/2 times as much sugar and water as juice (i.e., if you have a cup of juice, use just under 1-1/2 cups of sugar and 1-1/2 cups of water) into a saucepan. Cook the sugar/water mixture until it threads. Measure the resultant sugar syrup. Add an equal quantity of berry juice to it, and boil the mixture for 10 minutes. Strain this boiled vinegar through cheesecloth, and decant it into sterilized bottles. Cork or cover. Stored in the dark, strawberry vinegar should keep its color and flavor for up to a year.

When you are ready to start your salad, preheat the oven to 450 degrees. While the oven is preheating toss the rhubarb and sugar together in a bowl, and let them sit for at least 10 minutes.

Line a rimmed baking sheet with foil, and place the sugared rhubarb pieces on it. Bake until the rhubarb just begins to soften, about 5 minutes. Remove the rhubarb from the oven and set it aside.

In a small bowl or jar combine the vinegar, salt and pepper and oil.

Place the spinach in a salad bowl. Add the rhubarb, the pecans, and the feta; then remix the salad dressing and toss it over the salad. Serves 4 as a side salad.