Our State eats

Published in the March 2026 issue of Our State

Beginner Greens

Yield: 8 servings.

- ⅓ cup golden raisins
- 6 tablespoons sherry vinegar, plus more as needed
- 3 pounds kale, collards, turnip, beet, chard, and/or other similar large, leafy greens
- 2 slices thick-cut bacon, cut crosswise into ½-inch-wide pieces
- 1 to 2 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil, if needed
- 1 large red onion, halved lengthwise and thinly sliced (about 2 cups)
- 4 garlic cloves, thinly sliced
- 1 tablespoon firmly packed brown sugar
- ½ teaspoon crushed red pepper flakes
- Kosher salt and ground black pepper, to taste

In a small bowl, stir together the raisins and vinegar. Microwave on high for 30 seconds or until bubbling. Set aside for the raisins to plump.

Remove and discard any tough stems from the greens. Set aside and finely chop tender stems and set them aside. Cut leaves into thin ribbons. Fill a large bowl with ice water, add the shredded leaves, and swish to remove any grit. Drain leaves in a colander. It's fine if a little water clings to them.

Cook bacon in a large, deep skillet or saucepan over medium heat until it renders its fat and becomes crisp, stirring often, about 20 minutes. Transfer the bacon with a slotted spoon to a small bowl and set aside, leaving behind drippings. If the bacon does not render at least 4 tablespoons of drippings, add enough olive oil to make up the difference.

Stir in onion, reserved stems, and a pinch of salt. Cook, stirring often, until softened, about 5 minutes. Stir in garlic, sugar, and pepper flakes. Cook, stirring often, until the garlic is fragrant, about 1 minute.

Add the shredded greens in large handfuls, stirring until they begin to wilt before adding more. Sprinkle with a pinch of salt and continue to cook, tossing with tongs until the greens are just tender, 5 to 8 minutes. Do not let them turn soggy or slick. If the greens get dry before they are done, add a splash of water.

Stir in the raisins and any standing liquid. Season with salt and pepper to taste. Adjust the brown sugar and vinegar, if needed. Sprinkle with the reserved bacon just before serving.

Serve warm or at room temperature.

RECIPE BY SHERI CASTLE / PHOTOGRAPHY BY TIM ROBISON