

Recipes from *Death Come Quickly*

China Bayles #22

By Susan Wittig Albert

China's Purslane and Spinach Salad with Balsamic Vinaigrette

Malabar spinach (*Basella alba*) is a climbing vine that thrives in hot weather, long after spinach has bolted. It is high in vitamin A, vitamin C, iron, and calcium, and may be eaten raw or cooked. However, it is mucilaginous, so if you don't like that texture, use spinach instead. You can always plant it just to enjoy: it's an energetic vine with pretty red stems, white flowers, and red berries.

Purslane (aka portulaca, *Portulaca oleracea*) grows wild where I live (south central Texas). Its crisp, shiny leaves have a spicy flavor and are excellent in salads. The purslane that comes from the nursery may not be as tasty—but it might. Give it a try.

1/2 cup chopped purslane, thick stems removed
2 cups fresh spinach or Malabar spinach, torn into bite-size pieces
2 cucumbers, peeled, quartered lengthwise, seeded, and chopped
6 cherry tomatoes, halved
2 green onions, both green and white parts, chopped

Combine all ingredients in a large bowl. Serve with a bowl of balsamic vinaigrette. Serves four.

Balsamic Vinaigrette

3/4 cup extra virgin olive oil
2 tablespoons balsamic vinegar
2 tablespoons red wine vinegar
1/4 teaspoon Dijon mustard
1 teaspoon minced fresh parsley herbs (e.g. parsley, chives, tarragon)
Salt and pepper to taste

Cass' Shrimp, Pasta, and Rose Petals

Be sure to use only unsprayed roses from a home garden (florist roses have likely been sprayed). Fragrant roses have the best flavor. Snip the bitter white heel from each petal.

1 package capellini (angel-hair) pasta, 12-14 ounces
1 tablespoon extra virgin olive oil
2 cloves garlic, finely chopped
1/4 red or orange bell pepper, diced
1 green onion top, chopped
16 ounces medium raw shrimp, peeled and deveined
1/2 cup dry white wine
2 tablespoons unsalted butter
3 tablespoons grated Parmesan cheese
Salt to taste
1/2 to 3/4 cup red or orange rose petals, divided in half

Garnish, if preferred: tiny bouquet of rosemary, parsley, and a single pink rosebud

Cook pasta according to package directions. Drain, reserve 1/2 cup of cooking liquid.

While the pasta cooks, heat oil in a large skillet over medium heat. Sauté garlic, red bell pepper, and green onion top just until soft and fragrant (a minute or so). Add shrimp and wine and lower heat. Simmer until the shrimps begin to turn pink, about 3-4 minutes. Stir in butter and Parmesan. If the sauce seems too thick, add some of the reserved pasta cooking liquid, a tablespoon at a time.

Toss pasta in the skillet with the shrimp and sauce. Add half of the rose petals and toss lightly. Distribute onto four plates and sprinkle the rest of the petals over each portion. Serves 4. Garnish the plates, if preferred.

Cass' Rose Petal Salad

Endive (*Cichorium endivia*) is a flavorful leaf vegetable in the daisy family, related to chicory. To prepare Belgian endive, slice off about 1/8th inch from the stem end. With a paring knife, cut out a cone shape about 1/2-inch deep from the stem end, to remove the slightly bitter core. Separate into leaves. To prepare rose petals, see the recipe above. Cardamom gives the dressing a nice "what-is-it?" taste.

Leaves of 2 small Belgian endives

Leaves of 1 small head of Boston lettuce, washed, patted dry and torn into bite-sized pieces

1/4 cup almonds

3/4-1 cup prepared rose petals

1/4 cup extra virgin olive oil

6 tablespoons raspberry vinegar

1 teaspoon finely minced rosemary

1/8 teaspoon ground cardamom

Salt to taste

Arrange the endive leaves on four salad plates, and add the torn lettuce. Top with almonds and rose petals.

In a small bowl, whisk the olive oil, vinegar, rosemary, and cardamom. Add salt to taste. Drizzle over salads and serve immediately.

Cass' Chilled Roses and Strawberries Soup

A perfectly delicious dessert soup with the delicate fragrance of roses.

2 pints fresh or frozen (slightly thawed) strawberries

1 cup prepared rose petals

1 teaspoon rosewater

1 teaspoon vanilla extract

2 cups plain yogurt

1/2 cup orange juice

1/2 cup sugar

1/8 teaspoon ground cardamom

Whole fresh strawberries and sprigs of mint for garnish

In a blender, combine all ingredients. Chill. Pour into dessert cups or bowls, garnish with strawberries and mint.

Muhallabiyeh

Muhallabiyeh is a delightfully creamy, slightly surprising milk pudding with a legendary history that goes back to ancient Persia. It is usually made with ground rice; you can substitute a cream of rice cereal, which is easily available.

4 cups milk
4 heaping tablespoons cream of rice cereal
3/4 cup granulated sugar
1 teaspoon orange blossom water
1 teaspoon rose water

Garnish 1/3 cup blanched almonds, 4-6 mint sprigs

Combine milk and cereal in a saucepan over high heat. Stirring constantly, bring to a boil. Reduce heat to low and add sugar. Continue stirring until the mixture thickens, about 7 minutes. Add orange blossom and rose water. Simmer, continuing to stir, for 2 more minutes. Remove from heat. Pour into 4 to 6 dessert cups. Cool and garnish with almonds and a sprig of mint. Chill.

Rose Petal Sandwiches

Your guests will ooh and aah over these pretty but easily-made tea sandwiches. Delightfully different.

4 ounces cream cheese
1 tablespoon rosewater
1 1/2 cup rose petals, prepared as above
salt to taste
8 thinly cut slices bread, crusts removed

In a small bowl, combine cheese, lemon juice, and half of the rose petals. Cover and chill overnight.

Bring cheese mixture to room temperature. Spread on four slices of bread and layer on remaining rose petals. Place second slice of bread on top and cut into quarters diagonally. Makes 16 small sandwiches.

Rosemary and Thyme Breadsticks

You can substitute your own favorite savory herb blend for the rosemary and thyme. Basil and chives are nice, or sage and savory. Experiment—and enjoy.

2 1/2 teaspoons active dry yeast
3 tablespoons brown sugar
1 cup warm water
1 teaspoon salt
1/4 cup vegetable oil
3 cups bread flour

2 tablespoons butter
1 tablespoon virgin olive oil

3 tablespoons Parmesan cheese
1/2 teaspoon salt
2 teaspoons garlic powder
1/2 teaspoon onion powder
1 teaspoon finely chopped fresh rosemary (1/2 tsp, if you're using dry)
1 teaspoon finely chopped fresh thyme (1/2 tsp, if you're using dry)

To make the dough, stir yeast and brown sugar together in a large mixing bowl, then add warm water and allow to sit until foamy on top (about 5 minutes). Add salt, oil, and flour, mixing vigorously. Knead until dough is smooth and elastic, about 5 minutes. On a floured surface, roll dough into a 10 x 15 inch rectangle.

Melt butter in the microwave or in a small pan over low heat. Stir in olive oil and brush evenly over dough. Mix cheese, salt, garlic powder, onion powder, and herbs and distribute evenly over dough.

Spray a 9" x 13" baking dish with non-stick spray. With the long side toward you, fold the rectangular dough in half. Cut into 12 even strips. Remove one, stretch it gently, twist three times, and place in the baking dish. Repeat with remaining 11 strips. Cover with damp towel and let rise for 20-30 minutes. Preheat oven to 375°F. Bake until golden brown, 10-15 minutes.

McQuaid's Secret Barbeque Sauce

If anybody asks, McQuaid always says, "It's the beer." But really, it's the combination of the beer, vinegar, and molasses.

2 cups ketchup
1 can beer or dark ale
1/2 cup apple cider vinegar
1/4 cup molasses
2 teaspoons cayenne (more, if you can get away with it)
1/2 tablespoon fresh ground black pepper
1/2 tablespoon onion powder
1/2 tablespoon garlic powder
1/2 tablespoon ground mustard
2 tablespoon Worcestershire sauce
1 tablespoon lemon juice

In a medium saucepan, combine all ingredients. Bring mixture to a boil, reduce heat to simmer. Cook uncovered, stirring frequently, for 1 hour 20 minutes.

China's Ginger Syrup

1 1/2 cup sugar
1 1/2 cup water
4 tablespoons peeled fresh ginger, chopped (about 2 ounces)
2 teaspoons finely grated lemon peel
Combine all ingredients in small saucepan; stir over medium heat until sugar dissolves. Boil until reduced to about 1 1/2 cups, about 5 minutes. Store unused portion in refrigerator for up to two weeks.

China's Taco Casserole

4 or 5 crumbled taco shells or corn chips
1 1/2 pounds ground beef
1 medium onion, finely chopped
1 tablespoon chili powder
1 teaspoon ground cumin
1 teaspoon garlic powder
1 4-ounce can green chilies, chopped
1 cup milk
2 eggs
1/2 cup baking mix
1 cup shredded cheddar cheese
2 large tomatoes, chopped, divided in half

Shredded lettuce
Sour cream
Salsa

Preheat oven to 400°F. Coat an 8" x 12" casserole dish with non-stick spray.

Spread crumbled taco shells in dish. Brown and crumble beef and onion in a large frying pan. Drain. Stir in the chili powder, cumin, and garlic powder. Evenly spread seasoned meat on top of the taco shells in dish and top with the green chilies.

Beat milk, eggs, and baking mix until smooth. Pour evenly over the meat. Bake for 25 minutes. If serving immediately, top with cheese and half of the chopped tomatoes. Bake another 8-10 minutes, until firm in the center.

If freezing, cool and wrap (without tomatoes and cheese). To serve, thaw and reheat in 400° F. oven for about 15 minutes. Add cheese and half of the chopped tomato and bake 8 to 10 minutes. To serve, garnish with remaining chopped tomatoes, lettuce, sour cream, and salsa. Serves 6-8.