



ANSON MILLS

Collard Greens with Cornmeal Dumplings

Yield

6 side dish portions

Time

About 45 minutes, including collard green prep time

Cooking Remarks

From cornbread to johnnycakes, cornmeal absolutely blooms when it comes into contact with hot liquid. Its flavor awakens and its grittiness subdues. We bloomed ours in boiling milk and melted butter. A simple mush—what could be better? The flour we selected to help the dumplings get a grip on themselves was Anson Mills pastry flour, folded lightly into the mush to make a soft dough. This dough may, in fact, seem treacherously soft and difficult to handle, but don't worry: it will steam into firm, perfect dumplings. Use wet hands to form the dumplings and keep your touch nice and light.

For the sake of clarity, the recipe is written so that the collards are cooked before the dumplings are made, but so that the collards don't wait for their companions, the two really must be cooked in tandem. While the broth simmers (step 3), set up the pot and steamer, and while the collards cook (step 4), make, shape, and start steaming the dumplings. But if, in the end, the collards must wait for a few minutes, don't worry—they do have some patience.

Equipment Mise en Place

For the collards, you will need a digital kitchen scale; a large colander; a large, wide saucepan; and a pair of tongs.

For the dumplings, you will need a large saucepan with a tight-fitting lid, a steamer insert or collapsible steamer basket (to fit in the large saucepan), a small saucepan, a mixing bowl, and a rubber spatula.

Ingredients

for the collards

1½ pounds (2 bunches) collard greens
3 cups Smoked Ham and Chicken Stock
1 small onion, chopped
1 small Turkish bay leaf
1 teaspoon sugar or agave nectar
½ teaspoon red pepper flakes (optional)
Fine sea salt and freshly ground black pepper
White vinegar
Tabasco

for the dumplings

Vegetable oil spray

6 ounces (1¼ cups) Anson Mills Coarse Yellow Cornmeal

2.5 ounces (½ cup) unbleached all-purpose flour or an equal amount *by weight* of Anson Mills Colonial Style Fine Cloth-Bolted Pastry Flour

2 teaspoons baking powder

1 cup whole milk

2 ounces (4 tablespoons) unsalted butter, cut into 4 pieces

1 teaspoon fine sea salt

Directions

1. Prepare the collards: Fill a clean sink with cold water. Plunge the collards into the water and agitate them by swirling them about by their stems. Transfer the greens to a large colander. Drain the sink, refill it, and wash the collards again. Shake the collards free of excess water and let them drain in the colander for a few minutes.

2. Stack several leaves on top of each other with the stems pointing in the same direction and trim the stems even with the leaves. Discard the stems. Loosely roll the collards lengthwise into a cigar. Beginning at the leaf end, cut the cigar crosswise into strips 3 inches wide, narrowing the width to 1 inch as you near the stem ends. Turn the strips 90 degrees and cut the strips crosswise into halves or thirds to create big rectangular pieces. Repeat with the remaining collards. You should have well over a pound of cleaned, trimmed collards or about 5½ quarts, loosely packed. Set the collards aside.

3. Bring the stock to a simmer in a large, wide saucepan over medium-high heat. Add the onion, bay leaf, sugar, and pepper flakes, if using. Cover, reduce the heat to medium, and simmer to infuse flavors, about 10 minutes.

4. Add the collards to the simmering stock, cover the pot, and let the greens cook down, turning them from time to time with tongs, until the leaves are uniformly wilted and stems are tender with creamy centers, 15 to 20 minutes. Season to taste with salt, pepper, and vinegar. Cover to keep warm.

5. Make the dumplings: While the stock simmers, fill a large saucepan with a tight-fitting lid (one that accommodates a steamer insert or collapsible steamer basket) with 1 to 2 inches of water, making sure that the bottom of the steamer is not submerged. Cover the saucepan and set it on a burner, but do not turn on the heat. Spray the steamer insert with vegetable oil spray and set it aside.

6. Turn the cornmeal into a medium mixing bowl. Turn the pastry flour and baking powder into a small bowl and stir to combine. Combine the milk, butter, and salt in a small saucepan and bring to a boil over high heat. As soon as the butter has melted, pour the boiling mixture over the cornmeal and stir with a rubber spatula to moisten. Let the mixture cool for 5 minutes.

7. While the collards cook, bring the water in the saucepan to a boil over high heat. Gently fold the pastry flour mixture into the cornmeal mush with a rubber spatula. Do not overwork. With moistened hands, lightly shape the dough into golf ball–sized dumplings, rolling the dough between your palms, and place them one by one in the steamer basket. You should have 12 dumplings. Uncover the saucepan and lower the steamer insert over the boiling water. Immediately replace the lid and lower the heat to medium-high. Steam the dumplings, without peeking, for 15 minutes. When you uncover the saucepan, the dumplings should be puffy, slightly shiny, and firm to the touch. They may also be stuck together, but they'll separate easily.

8. To serve, spoon the collard greens and a generous amount of their potlikker into 6 shallow bowls. Place 2 dumplings in each bowl. Pass the Tabasco at the table. This is a superb side dish with pork chops or roast chicken, or simply attended by a pot of beans.