
COOKING FRESH



Between February and May our local farmers' markets swell with abundant local produce. The winter crops of February (lettuces, cooking greens and root vegetables) gradually give way to squash, cucumbers, beans and other warmer-weather veggies as the threat of frost leaves the Valley. If you seek them out, you can find fava beans, green garlic, asparagus and other harbingers of spring. At the beginning of May, the sweet onion harvest begins.

February and March bring the end of our local citrus (if it's survived the frosts) and the last of the navels, blood oranges and tangelos (although you will find Valencia oranges and grapefruit into April and beyond.) In March, citrus blossoms perfume the Valley and their scent heralds the arrival of fresh orange blossom honey. Early May offers the first hint of the local stone fruit with early ripening varieties of apricots and peaches.

If the much-needed rains continue, we'll have an abundance of desert blossoms including some native edibles. The tender, bright green young pads of the prickly pear emerge ready for a spring salad.

Chickens increase their egg production as daylight lengthens.

NOW IN SEASON

Asparagus
Beets
Bok choy
Cabbage
Carrots
Cauliflower
Eggplant
Fava beans
Fennel
Garlic (*green, then mature*)
Grapefruit
Green beans
Greens (*chard, collards, kale, mustard*)
Lemons
Microgreens
Onions (*green, then mature*)
Oranges (*blood, Valencia*)
Peas
Potatoes (*new*)
Radishes
Rutabaga
Summer squash (*baby*)
Turnips

POSSIBILITIES



Use this recipe on salads made with bitter greens or spinach, orange segments and nuts. To make the vanilla sugar, insert your used/scraped, washed and dried vanilla beans into a canister of sugar. You can substitute local citrus blossom honey for the vanilla sugar (especially good on fruit salad).

ORANGE VANILLA VINAIGRETTE

1/2 cup white wine vinegar
1/2 cup fresh orange juice
1 Tbsp. vanilla sugar
1 tsp. vanilla extract
1/2 tsp. orange zest

Combine white wine vinegar, orange juice, vanilla sugar, vanilla extract and orange zest in a bowl. Whisk together until thoroughly mixed.

This vinaigrette should be used the same day; otherwise the orange zest will make it turn bitter.

*Recipe reprinted with permission from
Simply Vanilla: Recipes for Everyday Use
by Patty Elsberry and Matt Bolus (Elevate)
See www.arizonavanilla.com.*