

Braised Tuscan Kale with Pancetta and Caramelized Onions

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Yield Makes 6 side-dish servings

Ingredients

2 1/4 pound Tuscan kale (3 bunches; also called cavolo nero, lacinato kale, or dinosaur kale), stems and center ribs discarded

2 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil

1/2 pound pancetta, cut into 1/4-inch dice (1 3/4 cups)

2 fresh thyme sprigs

1 Turkish or 1/2 California bay leaf

2 fresh flat-leaf parsley sprigs

2 large onions, finely chopped

1 whole head of garlic, halved horizontally

3/4 stick (6 tablespoons) unsalted butter, cut into pieces

3 to 4 cups unsalted chicken stock

Special equipment: parchment paper; kitchen string

Preparation

Put oven rack in middle position and preheat oven to 350°F. Cut out a round of parchment paper to fit just inside a 5- to 6-quart heavy ovenproof pot, then set round aside.

Blanch kale in a 6- to 8-quart pot of boiling salted water in 2 batches, 2 minutes per batch, transferring with tongs to a colander as blanched, then drain well.

Warm oil in 5- to 6-quart pot over moderate heat, then add pancetta and cook, stirring frequently, until crisp, 10 to 15 minutes. Transfer pancetta with a slotted spoon to a plate and reserve, discarding all but 1/4 cup of fat in pot (if necessary).

Tie thyme, bay leaf, and parsley together with kitchen string to make a bouquet garni and add to pot along with onions and garlic. Cook over moderate heat, stirring frequently, until onions are golden brown, about 20 minutes. Return pancetta to pot then add butter and heat, stirring occasionally, until melted. Stir in kale and add enough stock to cover three fourths of kale. Increase heat to high and bring to a simmer. Cover kale directly with parchment round, then transfer pot to oven and braise, stirring once or twice, until kale is very tender, about 45 minutes.

Transfer pot to stovetop and discard parchment, then boil mixture, stirring occasionally, until almost all of liquid is evaporated but kale is still moist, about 35 minutes. Discard bouquet garni and garlic and season kale with salt and pepper.