

Calvosa Olson CNUA recipe for Menlo Park Library

Three Sisters Fall Salad

Developed by the Haudenosaunee, the three sisters is an advanced agricultural technique that enhances biodiversity, attracts pollinators, and deters weeds and pests by planting a trio of beans, corn, and squash together. It is a spiritually powerful part of Haudenosaunee culture. Here in California, in the fertile Capay Valley, the Yocha Dehe Wintun Nation are expanding tribal agriculture efforts in their homelands—their Séka Hills Elderberry Balsamic Vinegar is a staple in my pantry and, when combined with their Tribal Blend Olive Oil, makes a perfect dressing for this salad that honors the three sisters.

There is a big push toward “regenerative farming” in our food systems right now as our resources are depleting and the fertility of our soil declining. To be clear, “regenerative farming” is just Indigenous agriculture techniques repackaged and co-opted in a way that avoids any responsibility or acknowledgment of its Indigenous origins or of the land stolen for agriculture use. To “regenerate” means to re-create in a better form and/or to effect complete moral reform. So is it really regenerative agriculture if you’re using techniques that already existed, and is it truly a moral reform if you’re not acknowledging the original people that developed this technique or the land theft that had to occur in order for the current Ag community to exist? I don’t know, but here’s a salad.

Serves 4

Ingredients

1 1/2 cups cubed Cherokee Candy Roaster squash, or any winter squash

1 tablespoon [maple sugar from Passamaquoddy Maple](#)

1 teaspoon chile powder

1 teaspoon sunflower oil 4 1/2 cups water

1 1/2 cups whole-kernel cob-roasted [Pima corn from Ramona Farms Huuñ Ga’i](#)

Salt and pepper to taste

6 tablespoons salad oil, such as [Séka Hills Tribal Blend Olive Oil](#)

6 tablespoons salad vinegar, such as [Séka Hills Elderberry Balsamic Vinegar](#)

1 or 2 garlic cloves, smashed 1 teaspoon Dijon mustard

1 1/2 cups cooked [tepary beans from Ramona Farms](#)

2 cups baby kale (or NDN lettuces or any salad green you're in the mood for), torn into bite-sized pieces, if necessary

1 cup popped amaranth (see Note)

Directions

Preheat the oven to 400°F. Line a baking sheet with parchment paper.

In a medium bowl, toss the squash cubes with the maple sugar, chile powder, and sunflower oil. Spread the cubes out on the baking sheet and bake until easily pierced with a fork, 30 to 40 minutes. Set aside to cool.

In a large saucepan, bring the water along with the Pima corn to a full boil for 5 minutes. Reduce the heat to a simmer, cover, and cook for

45 more minutes. Remove the pan from heat and let stand covered for 10 minutes. Remove the lid, stir, add a pinch of salt and pepper, and set aside to cool.

In a mason jar, place the olive oil, vinegar, garlic, mustard, and salt and pepper to taste. Add the lid and shake the jar well to emulsify the oil and vinegar. Refrigerate until ready to use, and shake again before serving.

Place the kale in a large bowl, and add the squash, corn, and beans. Toss with the salad dressing and top with popped amaranth.

Note: If you're not sure how to make popped amaranth, here's my technique: Heat a high-sided pot over medium heat. Get it all the way up to temperature before adding 1 tablespoon amaranth seeds. The seeds should start popping right away. Place the lid on the pot and shake the pot. Pour the amaranth into a bowl. Turn the heat up or down as needed and throw in another tablespoon of seeds. It usually takes me a tablespoon or three to get the pot exactly at the right temp. But popped amaranth tastes great, like little mini pop-corns, the perfect texture and flavor for this salad. Or for any salad, really. I'm a fan.

This recipe is excerpted from *Chimi Nu'am: Native California Foodways for the Contemporary Kitchen* by Sara Calvosa Olson. Reprinted with permission from Heyday © 2023.

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