



OFF MENU

It's so easy being green

BY JULIA VIOLET

Spring is an exciting time in

Sacramento. The clouds part, the sunshine returns and all around our region, greens sprout through the soil. Whether you're looking for new textures to toss into salads, a tasty leafy green to saute or vibrant colors of microgreens to brighten your dish, local farmers grow varieties in abundance.

Found on menus and at farmers' markets, chicories, arugula, mustard greens, endive, spinach, kale and many other greens are all harvested within our region. The tops and leaves of local spring vegetables such as carrots, beets, turnips, radishes, kohlrabi and fennel all have beautiful tendrils that are useful in a variety of dishes.

Fava greens, the leafy part of a fava bean plant, are slightly sweet and tender. Toss them into salads, saute them or simply add a handful to homemade pastas or pasta sauce.

Chef Bryce Palmer of Mulvaney's B&L says he enjoys making use of the entire vegetable to honor the efforts of local farmers.

"We love to use carrot tops or any green top to make pasta filling and

pasta dough," he said. "The tops are also great for braised greens."

Microgreens are also popular at the market. These tiny one- to three-inch, immature versions of vegetables, herbs and plants are harvested before growing their true leaves. This makes them highly nutritious and packed with flavor. Despite how small they are—larger than sprouts, but smaller than baby greens—they provide much more nutritional value than their full-grown counterparts.

Sold by the ounce, many varieties can be purchased in small quantities and tossed into salads, used as a garnish, juiced or added to sandwiches and wraps. There are many uses beyond garnishing a plate: mustard microgreens are spicy and taste like

horseradish, while sunflower greens are nutty, crunchy and great on sandwiches. And beet microgreens bring a vibrant ruby red color to any dish. Pea shoots are high in antioxidants and add a tender, yet crisp pea-flavored bite to recipes.

Mustard microgreens are spicy and taste like horseradish, while sunflower greens are nutty, crunchy and great on sandwiches.

John Rodriguez of Finz Farmz, a local indoor farm that specializes in microgreens, says his personal favorite is a mix of garlic and chive for its appearance and aroma.

"When I bring it to the market, people can smell it when they walk by," he said. "It's really great on pasta. It's a head turner and it tastes phenomenal ... People are always surprised by microgreens' bold taste."

You don't have to look too hard to find microgreens on local menus.

Selland's Market Cafe sells a Farmers Market Salad piled high with greens, microgreens, veggies, nuts and seeds. And its Power Caesar Salad has four types of greens and even more toppings. East Sac's Allora even has a backyard garden stacked with microgreens, herbs and flowers, which are frequently used in the kitchen.

It's easy to eat more greens. This season, rethink those vegetables in the fridge, mix up the typical salad and add some flavorful microgreens to your next dish. □

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