

Allotment Diary

Brighten up the grey days of February with food that's as vibrant on the palate as the plate, says Katie Moore of Allotment, the catering company she runs from her Cambridgeshire home and garden

CHICORY & BLOOD ORANGE SALAD

Serves 4

INGREDIENTS:

For the salad:

- 3 blood oranges
- 3 clementines
- 2 red chicory
- 2 small heads radicchio (or 3 additional chicory)
- 60g toasted walnuts, roughly chopped
- Salt and pepper

For the dressing:

- 4tbsp walnut oil
- 4tbsp citrus juice
- 1tbsp red wine vinegar
- 1tbsp finely chopped shallot
- Salt and pepper

February can seem a somewhat sad month in the allotment as many things are coming to an end, and others are yet to begin. There are, however, a few choice gems that are sure to brighten up any mealtime and this first recipe is as vibrant on the palate as it is in the bowl. The combination of bitter crimson leaves and sweet juicy citrus are refreshing eaten simply on their own, or as a dinner-time side salad. I like to use a mix of leaves, but if you can only get your hands on chicory that will work just as well.

METHOD:

1. Using a serrated knife, slice the tops and bottoms off the blood oranges and clementines, then carefully cut away all of the peel and pith, leaving just the smooth flesh.

2. Slice the clementines into round discs and place in a bowl, then use the knife to slice between the membranes of the blood oranges to release the segments. Place these in the bowl with the clementines and squeeze over the juices from the blood orange remains.

3. Cut the bases off the chicory and

radicchio and discard the rough outer leaves.

4. Gently separate the inner leaves and tear any large leaves into smaller pieces. Arrange the leaves on a serving platter and scatter the orange slices and segments over the top, keeping their juices to use in the dressing. In a small bowl, whisk together the walnut oil, citrus juice, vinegar and shallots and season to taste.

5. Drizzle this over the top of the salad and finally top with the toasted walnuts. If serving this for guests, all of the elements can be prepared an hour or so ahead of time and kept in the fridge to be assembled freshly before eating.





RHUBARB & CARDAMOM COMPOTE

I've said it before, and I'm sure I'll say it again: forced rhubarb is one of my absolute favourites. The incredible vibrancy of the pink flesh is second to none, and it works perfectly in all manner of baked goods. This compote recipe is very simple and will keep for a week in the fridge or can be frozen for up to a year, so the delicious taste of rhubarb is always close to hand.

INGREDIENTS:

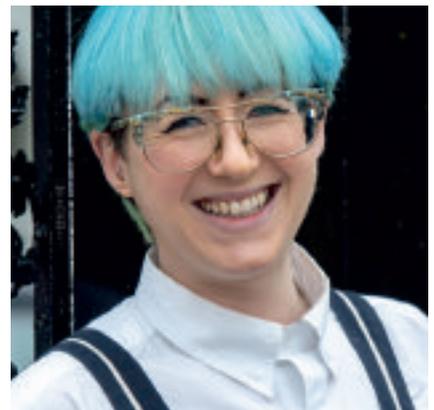
- 500g rhubarb
- 150g caster sugar
- 10 cardamom pods
- 50g lemon juice

METHOD:

1. Chop the rhubarb into evenly sized pieces, approximately 3cm in length, and put them in a large saucepan along with the sugar.
2. Gently crush the cardamom pods with the flat side of your knife and throw them into the pan with the lemon juice, before giving

everything a stir and covering the pan with a lid.

3. Place the pan over a medium heat and allow the rhubarb to gently cook for 15-20 minutes, stirring occasionally, until it has completely broken down.
4. Give the mixture a good stir, then carefully fish out the cardamom pods and discard, or add them to a jar of caster sugar to infuse the sugar with their wonderful aroma.
5. Let the compote cool before storing. It can then be served with yoghurt and granola for a delicious breakfast, on top of pancakes or toast, with ice-cream, or however else you wish.



For more information – including where to find Katie's fabulous food – follow @allotmentcafe and see allotmentcafe.com