

The National

Culinary Review®

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IT'S SUMMERTIME

SOUTHERN VEGETABLES SHINE

straight talk
*menu-writing
at its best*

hip hoppers
*rabbit on
the table*

in the spirit

ON THE COVER: At Farmer's Table, Wilson Wiegell fashions collard greens-wrapped quinoa that includes zucchini, yellow squash, red bell pepper and cucumber tossed in goji berry vinaigrette.

COVER PHOTO:
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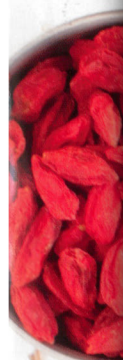
SUMMERTIME BOUNTIES

VEGETABLES WITH SOUTHERN FLAIR COME TO THE TABLE.

BY KAREN WEISBERG



Opposite: At Farmer's Table, collard greens-wrapped quinoa includes zucchini, yellow squash, red bell pepper and cucumber tossed in goji berry vinaigrette. Above: Fried green tomatoes with jalapeño pimento cheese is a menu staple at Soby's New South Cuisine.



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GREAT GREENS

At Farmer's Table, Boca Raton, Fla., co-owners Mitchell Robbins and Joseph "Joey" Giannuzzi put the emphasis on fresh high-quality ingredients while avoiding excess salt, fat, antibiotics, hormones and processing. Executive chef Wilson Wieggel is on the same page. He has worked at various restaurants in Manhattan, including Chanterelle, Aureole, Mesa Grill and Vong. Now, he aims to bring a certain Southern flair to the table, even though quite a few of his guests are snowbirds. Many have a growing interest in gluten-free items, and vegetables easily fill the bill.

Recently, Wieggel combined quinoa with small-dice zucchini, yellow squash, red bell pepper and cucumber. He prepares a goji berry vinaigrette to toss with the vegetables, then quickly blanches large collard leaves to set a nice green color. "I make a kale hummus, and menu the quinoa plus the goji-tossed vegetables wrapped with collard greens as a lunch item. People think you need to cook the heck out of collard greens, but here, there's a nice bite to it, and you haven't cooked out the vitamins and nutrients from those leafy greens."

Wieggel has been menuing sauteed kale with lemon and a millet/parsnip potato cake since his days at New York's Union Square Cafe. At Farmer's Table, he serves it with a light Florida citronette (one part honey, one part lemon juice and two parts GMO-free canola oil). And recently, he has been showing off his vegan Caesar salad.

"I make a great Caesar salad with anchovies and Parmesan, but I was skeptical that I could make an equally great vegan version," he says. Using a vegan mayonnaise, tofu and lots of roasted garlic, as well as nutritional yeast for 'cheesiness' and red dulse seaweed flakes to approximate the anchovy flavor, he's pleased with the results.

Wieggel likes to promote the restaurant's sides to those looking for gluten-free, vegetarian and vegan. "And now I'm thinking of putting more \$6 vegetable side dishes on the menu, or a choice of three for \$15," he says.

"I don't like overcooking vegetables—you lose much of the benefit. I've done raw, but the demand is not yet there." ■

