



## A Mess of Greens

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Popular Southern side dishes often make their way onto barbecue menus because the preparation fits into the pace of low-and-slow barbecue. Once a pot of greens is on the stove, it can simmer unattended for a while. Greens and potlikker not only keep for a few days, they improve with a little aging and reheating, meaning that they don't necessarily have to be tackled daily.

Big, leafy greens are common in the South. They don't have to be tracked down or shipped in. We sometimes say collards almost generically, when what we really mean is a mess of cooked greens. Map the braising greens of the South and you'll see zones where mustard or turnip greens are more popular than collards. For this recipe, I combined the big three into one pot. Each adds its own flavor and texture, making the whole thing better.

A pot of greens benefits from judicious seasoning with something smoked. Pork is traditional, although smoked turkey wings or legs infuse smokiness and depth of flavor.

Don't skip making the stock. It's the bedrock of good potlikker that's integral to good greens, as fully wrought as a fine soup. Although, as good as potlikker is, there is an art to serving greens in a way that keeps those juices from sloshing into anything else on our plates, including the barbecue—which is why greens often come in their own bowl or Styrofoam nook.

It's important to taste the greens to ensure the flavors are balanced when you make them and each time you heat them up. Even after you think your mess of greens is just right, set an array of hot sauces and vinegars on the table so your guests can tinker with their individual servings. People are like that.

*Makes 8 servings*

**12 to 16 ounces smoked turkey wings or legs**  
**4 cups richly flavored chicken broth, preferably homemade**  
**4 cups water**  
**2 1/2 pounds mixed sturdy, leafy greens, such as collards, mustard, and turnip**  
**2 tablespoons unfiltered apple cider vinegar**  
**2 tablespoons packed brown sugar, sorghum, or cane syrup**  
**2 teaspoons seasoned salt or kosher salt**  
**2 teaspoons ground black pepper**  
**1 teaspoon crushed red pepper flakes**  
**1 medium yellow onion, finely chopped (about 2 cups)**  
**Serve with: vinegar, pepper vinegar, and assorted hot sauces**

For the stock:

Place the turkey pieces, broth, and water in a large pot. Bring to a boil, reduce the heat, and simmer until the liquid reduces to 6 cups, about 2 hours. Strain and return to the pot. Discard the turkey pieces.

For the greens:

Strip the leafy greens from the tough stems and discard the stems. Cut or tear the leaves into bite-size pieces. To remove the inevitable grit (even if you don't see any), swish them in a sink full of cool water, let stand for a couple of minutes so that the grit will sink to the bottom, then lift out the leaves to drain in a large colander or on a clean towel. Let the clinging water drip away, but you don't have to dry them.

Bring the stock to a simmer and stir in vinegar, sugar, salt, pepper, and pepper flakes. Stir in the onions. Begin adding the greens a large handful at a time, letting them wilt a bit before adding more. It will look like too many greens to fit in the pot, but they cook down considerably, soon turning a mountain into a manageable hill of greens.

Reduce the heat and simmer gently until the greens are tender, but not slick or slimy, 30 to 45 minutes.

Taste the potlikker and adjust the seasoning to your liking, making sure that it's bold and balanced. If you need more heat, it's preferable to use hot sauce at this point rather than more pepper flakes because the liquid mixes in immediately and adds nice acidity.

It's fine to serve the greens right away, but for the best flavor, make them a day ahead. Let the greens cool, then cover and refrigerate overnight. Reheat gently before serving with vinegar, pepper vinegar, and hot sauce on the table.