

# BACON-BRAISED SWISS CHARD

SERVES 4

This is a very simple recipe for one of my favorite greens, Swiss chard. I firmly believe that chard leaves are best when cooked until they're just wilted. I remember doing a dinner with another chef one night, and just as my chard was ready to go, he asked if I was going to cook it for another half hour! Not a chance. I like my greens to have a bit of texture left in them, even spinach, which some people insist on cooking until it's complete mush. Not only is it an unpleasant texture, but you're cooking away all of the nutrients.

For this recipe, I remove the chard stems completely, as I think they can be a bit bitter and I prefer the flavor of the leaves. But if you come across some beautiful rainbow Swiss chard with vibrant stems, you can either save them to sauté in a little olive oil for your next meal or thinly slice and sauté a few as garnish for this dish. Just don't use too many, as they'll overpower the more delicate flavor of the leaves.

One final note: If you don't eat pork, the recipe is still great without it. Just start off with a little olive oil to sub in for the bacon fat. Of course, if you really want the great layer of salty and smoky flavor bacon adds to, well, everything, you may want to reconsider not eating pork. Just a thought.

4 slices bacon, cut crosswise into ¼-inch strips

½ cup diced red onion

3 garlic cloves, minced

4 Roma tomatoes, seeded, and finely diced

Salt

Freshly ground black pepper

3 pounds Swiss chard, stemmed, leaves torn into large pieces

3 tablespoons soy sauce

1 tablespoon balsamic vinegar

½ teaspoon red pepper flakes

1. Heat a Dutch oven or a large sauté pan with high sides or a over medium heat. Add the bacon and render the fat.

2. When most of the fat is rendered from the bacon and it begins to crisp, add the onion and garlic and cook until the onion is translucent, 2 to 3 minutes.

3. Stir in the tomatoes and cook 2 minutes longer. Season lightly with salt and pepper.

4. Add the chard, soy sauce, vinegar, and red pepper flakes. Stir until the chard wilts, 3 to 4 minutes.

5. Remove from the heat, adjust the seasoning, and serve hot.