

Authentic Southern Collard Greens with Ham Hocks (Grandma's Recipe)

Freshly picked, thoroughly washed, and stems removed.



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5 min

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INGREDIENTS

2 pounds collard greens: Freshly picked, thoroughly washed, and stems removed.

2 smoked ham hocks: This provides the essential smoky, salty foundation.

1 large onion: Chopped finely to melt into the broth.

4 cloves garlic: Minced to add a sharp, aromatic depth.

6 cups chicken broth: Provides more flavor than plain water.

1 Tablespoon olive oil: For sautéing the aromatics.

1 teaspoon red pepper flakes: For a subtle back-end heat.

Pinch of sugar: To balance the natural bitterness of the greens.

Salt and pepper: To taste.

1 Tablespoon apple cider vinegar: The essential "zing" to finish the dish.

DIRECTIONS

- 1. Sauté the Aromatics:** In a large, heavy-bottomed pot or Dutch oven, heat the olive oil over medium heat. Add the chopped onion and sauté until translucent and soft, about 5 minutes. This builds the flavor base.
- 2. Infuse the Base:** Stir in the minced garlic and red pepper flakes. Cook for another minute until the garlic is fragrant, being careful not to let it burn.
- 3. Create the Stock:** Add the smoked ham hocks to the pot, followed by the 6 cups of chicken broth and the pinch of sugar. Bring the mixture to a gentle boil. Let this simmer for about 45 minutes. This step is crucial because it softens the ham hock and extracts the collagen and smoky flavor into the broth.
- 4. Simmer the Greens:** After the broth has developed its flavor, reduce the heat to medium-low and add the collard greens. You may need to add them in batches as they wilt down. Cover the pot and let the greens simmer until they are tender and reach your desired level of "doneness"-usually another 45 to 60 minutes.
- 5. The Chop and Skim:** Once tender, drain some of the excess juice (but keep it nearby!). Use a chopper or a sharp knife to finely chop the collards for that classic Southern texture. Skim any excess fat off the top of the pot. Add about 1 tablespoon of the concentrated pot liquid back into the chopped collards to keep them moist.
- 6. Final Seasoning:** Season with salt, pepper, and the apple cider vinegar. Taste as you go-the vinegar is the key to making the flavors "pop."
- 7. Serve:** Serve hot! Be sure to pull the meat off the ham hocks and mix it back into the greens for the ultimate bite.

SWAPS & NOTES

The Greens: If you can't find collards, you can use turnip greens or mustard greens, though the cooking time may be slightly shorter.

The Meat: If ham hocks aren't available, smoked turkey wings or thick-cut bacon can serve as a substitute for that smoky element.

Vegetarian Option: Skip the meat and use vegetable broth with a teaspoon of liquid smoke to mimic the traditional flavor.

The Broth: If you are watching your sodium, use low-sodium chicken broth and adjust your salt at the very end.

TIPS FOR SUCCESS

Wash Thoroughly: Collard greens are grown in sandy soil.

Wash them at least three times in a sink full of cold water to ensure no grit remains.

Low and Slow: Don't rush the simmering process.

The longer they cook on low heat, the more tender they become.

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