

Kickass Whiskey-Braised Collards – Comfort du Jour

I amped up these collards with fresh garlic and a few extra shakes of a specialty pepper mix we love, which includes smoky chipotle, fruity ancho and fiery habanero. The combination of hot pepper flavors sent these collards over the top into kick-ass territory. The real kicker, though, was the shot of whiskey I splashed into them. I used Uncle Nearest 1856 whiskey, and at 100 proof, it's pretty sturdy. The oak-charred barrel notes of the spirit imparted additional smokiness to these collards, which cooked up in about half the time as my regular, go-to recipe. That might have been the whiskey, or it could just be that I served them up earlier than usual, because they smelled so darn good.

INGREDIENTS

3 slices uncured bacon, cut into 1/2" pieces
1/2 large yellow or sweet onion, chopped
3 cloves fresh garlic, chopped or minced
Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper
Several shakes [Dark and Smoky red pepper blend](#) (or any crushed red pepper you like)
1 large bunch fresh collard leaves, washed and trimmed of heavy stems
1 shotglass [Uncle Nearest 1856](#) whiskey (about 3 tablespoons)
1 cup low-sodium vegetable broth

INSTRUCTIONS

In a large skillet or pot, cook the bacon and onion over medium heat until the bacon has crispy edges and the onion is softened. Add the garlic, season with a bit of salt and pepper, and cook another minute or two.

Clear a space in the center of the pan and add about a teaspoon of olive oil. Shake the red pepper flakes into the oil to activate the flavors, and then toss the bacon-onion mixture to spread it around.

Add the collards, a handful at a time until wilted, and toss to cook. When the collards have softened and collapsed into the pan, add the whiskey and vegetable broth and bring to a boil.

Reduce heat and simmer, covered, until collards are tender (about 30 minutes). Adjust salt and pepper to taste.