

Bacon & Kale Gratin

Recipe 276 of 365

Red Russian Kale is gorgeous, with its deep emerald-green leaves and red ribs, but like most grown-up kale, it's most tender when it's cooked a long time. To prepare it for this hearty, warming side dish, chop the tough ends off right where the leaves begin to sprout out of the stalk. Gather the kale leaves together in groups, and cut the kale into 1/4" strips across the stalk, almost like cutting basil into chiffonade. Once the kale is cut, it's easier to soak and spin dry in a salad spinner.

TIME: 30 minutes active time

MAKES: 4 to 6 servings

2 thick slices bacon or pancetta, cut into 1/4" dice

1 big bundle Red Russian Kale (about 1 1/4 pound), rinsed, dried, and chiffonaded

Salt and freshly ground pepper

1 cup chicken stock or broth

2 tablespoons all-purpose flour

1 tablespoon butter, cut into tiny cubes, plus more for buttering dish

1/4 cup grated Parmesan cheese

1/2 cup heavy cream

Preheat the oven to 375 degrees.

Preheat a large, deep skillet or soup pot over medium heat. When hot, add the bacon, and cook for about 10 minutes, or until almost crispy. Add the kale, season with salt and pepper, and cook 5 minutes, stirring, or until the kale turns bright green. Add the stock, cover the pot, and cook 10 minutes, stirring once or twice. Take the lid off the kale and cook another 5 minutes or so, until no liquid remains at the bottom of the pot. (You want the kale to be fairly dry.)

Remove the pot from the heat, add the flour, and stir until no white remains. Butter a medium oval gratin dish (a pie plate or several small crème brûlée dishes or large ramekins would work as well), and transfer the kale to the gratin dish in a roughly even layer. Season the kale with salt and pepper, dot with the butter, and sprinkle the Parmesan evenly over the top. Drizzle the cream over cheese, and bake for 30 minutes, until the cream is bubbling and the cheese is browned. Serve warm.