

*Come with me into the world of gourmet cooking in 2006.*

## Turnip Greens Revisited

It was one of those glorious April afternoons in Lynchburg. The birds were singing, the neighborhood kids, in tank tops and flip-flops, were cruising Heath Avenue with their skateboards, Jim was washing the cars out on the driveway, and I got a hankering to get some of that fine red Virginia soil under my fingernails. Last fall, after the turnip greens debacle, I lost heart in my cute little garden and pretty much abandoned it over winter. We had a mild winter so those turnip greens never did die off and they were quite lovely with their tall yellow blossoms. Ok, so the correct term is “they had bolted”, but I prefer to call them “blooming”.

I took my hoe and started to dig in the dirt. Except the dirt was hard enough to bend the hoe. No problem...those turnip greens looked mighty sturdy and I figured if I just pulled them out, the dirt would loosen around them so I could get the soil broken. I grabbed a bush and pulled....nothing happened. Oh, dear! The next pull had some serious muscles involved and I discovered why those plants were so solidly anchored in the ground. They had little turnips under them! Now, I distinctly remembered the seed package assuring that this variety of turnips did not grow turnips underground...they were only for the growth of body-nourishing greens. Well, OK! I had a bonus on my hands! It took some doing but eventually all the plants were yanked and they yielded their golf-ball-size tubers.

I carefully removed the top growth from the treasures and took them into the house for preparation. To be honest, in passing, I did remember that the one time Mom cooked turnips, I despised them but had high hopes that the advancement of age would have somehow altered my taste preferences. These little gems were covered with hair-size rootlets so I took a scissors and lopped 'em off. After about a dozen washings, the water finally did not run Virginia dirt red and I was ready to peel them. Bad decision...my sharpest knife would not budge the peels. OK, fine...potatoes and peaches will peel easier when they are cooked so I figured the same would surely work for my turnips.

Remember I told you that this was an April day? The April First date should have warned me but, ever the optimist, I plunged ahead. Into the pot of boiling water the veggies went. You must realize that boiling turnips tend to give a house that lived-in aroma. Frankly, they stunk. About that time Jim came in the door and, with a look of concern, asked, “What ARE you cooking, Shugah? Is that supper?” He was almost able to cover up his relief when I assured him that spaghetti was the entrée for the evening.

After a half hour of cooking, I tested them with a fork for tenderness. The prongs nearly bent backwards. So I “let 'em rip” another twenty minutes. Those little critters still would not “poke” so I tossed the whole mess into the garbage.

This week I spoke with our “lawn mower guy” and he is going to come over one day soon with a roto tiller to break up the clumps in my cute little garden so I can plant some tomatoes. The deer are waiting patiently for the new crop.

