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Barley, Heirloom Tomato Salad *with Roasted Onion Vinaigrette*

Serves 6

When Heirloom tomatoes begin arriving at market, there is only one thing to do: buy them and feast. Barley, one of the most forgiving and easy to work with grains, is a terrific place to begin when thinking of healthy, delicious, and easy summer salads. Because both the Heirlooms and barley are nearly perfect in flavor they need little more than a complementary taste platform to work off of. Here I use pan and oven-roasting techniques to bring out the natural sweetness of fresh corn and sweet Vidalia onions, and a bit of aged wine vinegars to make this utterly simple but richly flavored dressing. Use the vinaigrette sparingly – more like a garnish, than a sauce.

Ingredients:

For the salad:

3 cups prepared pearly barley (*note: the barley can be freshly prepared, but not hot; it can also be cool from refrigeration*).

1 tablespoon olive oil (I use a simple herb blended olive oil)

2 tablespoons butter

1 1/2 cups corn (use frozen or when in season, fresh cut from the cob)

1 1/2 to 2 lbs. assorted Heirloom tomatoes, sliced, halved, quartered or wedged, as appropriate for the type and size of tomato

1/2 cup fresh chopped basil, to garnish

1 tablespoon fresh chopped mint, to garnish

For the dressing:

2 medium Vidalia or other sweet onions, peeled and sliced into thick (3/4" to 1") rings

4 cloves garlic, unpeeled

2 tablespoons olive oil

Coarse salt and fresh ground pepper

1 tablespoon dry Sherry

3 tablespoons aged balsamic vinegar (at least 12-15 years or more)

2 tablespoons Sherry vinegar

1/2 - 1 cup high quality, extra virgin olive oil, preferably with an herbaceous note

Sea Salt and fresh ground pepper, to season

Preparation:

In a large mixing bowl, toss the prepared barley with 1 tablespoon of olive oil to loosen grains. Set aside. *Note:* I like to use an herb infused olive oil for an additional layer of flavor.

In a large, heavy skillet (I use cast iron), heat the butter over medium heat. When butter is bubbling, add corn. Toss to coat; reduce the heat to medium-low. Season with salt and pepper. Sauté until the corn is just beginning to caramelize on the edges. Take care not to steam the corn; the goal here is to pan roast which allows

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the sugars in the corn to caramelize. Remove from heat and transfer to a shallow bowl to cool.

Make the vinaigrette: Preheat the oven to 375° F. In a large, heavy roasting pan, toss the onions and the unpeeled garlic with the olive oil. Season with salt and pepper and roast in the oven until the onions begin to caramelize and soften. The skins of the garlic should be charred, about 45 to 60 minutes. Remove from oven and when cool enough to handle, peel skins from garlic and coarsely chop. Chop onions (you should yield about 1 cup) and toss with garlic. Set aside to cool. Meanwhile, in a small food processor or blender, combine the sherry and the vinegars. When the vegetables are cool, add to the work bowl and process until combined. With the processor running, add enough olive oil to make an emulsified, but balanced, dressing. It will be thick and sauce-like. Taste. Season generously with sea salt and fresh ground pepper. Set aside.

Add the corn to the barley and toss to combine. Gently fold in the Heirloom tomatoes, and about 1/4 of the vinaigrette. Garnish with basil and mint. Pass the remaining vinaigrette at the table.

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