



Vietnamese-Inspired Watermelon and Tomato Salad

Serves 4 to 6

I really love purslane in this salad for its lemony flavor and juicy texture, but I realize it's not always readily available, so using arugula is perfectly fine. We belong to a pick-your-own CSA in eastern Long Island called Quail Hill Farm, and purslane is basically a weed that pops up in between the rows and anywhere it can. I pick it when I see it, as there is plenty of it. I even have seen it growing in urban pavement cracks and my herb pots on the deck! I also have seen it in recent years being sold as a crop in farmer's markets, but you might want to forage in the garden before paying good money for it.

For the salad:

- 2 small shallots, sliced crosswise and separated into rings (about 1 cup)
- 1 tablespoon all-purpose flour
- 1/2 cup vegetable oil
- 3 pounds seedless watermelon (weighed with rind), or 1/2 small seedless watermelon
- 4 cups trimmed purslane or arugula
- 1 pound heirloom tomatoes (2 to 3), cut into wedges
- 1 cup fresh mint leaves
- 1 small red chile, thinly sliced
- Black pepper

For the dressing:

- 2 teaspoons white or yellow miso
 - 1 tablespoon fish sauce
 - Dash of sriracha
 - 2 tablespoons fresh lime juice (from 1 juicy lime)
 - 2 tablespoons vegetable oil
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1. To make the salad: Toss the shallots with the flour on a small plate. Have a paper towel-lined plate nearby. If you have a pair of cooking tweezers, now is the time to use them! Heat 1/2 cup of oil in a small (8-inch) heavy skillet over medium heat until a shallot ring sizzles gently when dropped in. When the oil is hot, add all the shallots and fry until browned and crisp, about 4 to 6 minutes. As they cook, stir occasionally and remove any that start to get too brown. Scoop out with a slotted spoon or frying strainer and drain on the paper towels.
2. Cut the watermelon into flat triangular pieces. Spread the purslane on a platter or shallow serving bowl. Arrange the watermelon on top with the tomatoes, mint leaves, and chile.
3. To make the dressing: Whisk all the ingredients in a small bowl and drizzle over the salad.
4. Top the salad with the shallots, grind pepper over top, and serve.