

Very Berry Salad

*from **In Our Grandmothers' Kitchens***

Ingredients:

for the strawberry vinegar:

strawberries (don't use too many at a time or this will take forever)
enough distilled white vinegar to cover them
equal amounts of sugar and water

for the salad:

1/2 pound fresh spinach
4 small or 2 larger (more or less to taste) hikurai bulbs (use radishes if you don't have hikurai),
thinly sliced and cut in half if they seem a little big
15 to 20 tiny strawberries
crumbled feta cheese to taste

for the vinaigrette:

2 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil
1 tablespoon strawberry vinegar
salt and pepper to taste

Instructions:

The day before you want to eat your salad (or any time up to a year before!) start the vinegar.

Place the berries in a non-aluminum pan (I use a porcelain dish). Cover them with the vinegar, and leave them to soak, covered, overnight. If you forget them for a day and wait 2 nights, they will still be fine.

The next day (or the day after that), gently strain the juice through cheesecloth. You may squeeze the berries a little, but don't overdo; letting the juice drip out on its own is best.

Measure the juice. Then measure a little under 1-1/2 times as much sugar and water as juice (i.e., if you have a cup of juice, use just under 1-1/2 cups of sugar and 1-1/2 cups of water) into a saucepan.

Cook the sugar/water mixture until it threads. Measure the resultant sugar syrup. Add an equal quantity of berry juice to it, and boil the mixture for 10 minutes. Strain this boiled vinegar through cheesecloth, and decant it into sterilized bottles. Cork or cover. Stored in the dark, strawberry vinegar should keep its color and flavor for up to a year.

When you're ready to make the salad, combine its ingredients in a pretty bowl.

Combine the vinaigrette ingredients in a small jar with a tight lid. (Depending on your taste, you may want a little more or a little less dressing than I specify here, but the oil/vinegar proportion of 2 to 1 should hold.)

Shake to combine, and toss the vinaigrette onto the salad. Serves 4 generously.