Sounds of Nature

Paul, a close friend in Virginia, and I in the spring of each year wage a challenge. The first one of us to drive through a hollow with our windows open and hear the song of the frog... calls the other. It’s the first warm day, warm enough to have the sunroof back yet cool enough to think maybe it’s not summer yet. But, because hope draws you in, you linger. By chance you cross a low area where water settles and the ring of the “peepers” sing out. Peepers beckon spring to me.

Over the last few years with my move here to Michigan and my visits back to our place in Virginia I have noticed a deeply seeded connection with the birds. In VA my home has long eves and sits on top of a mountain that tends to stay cool most of the year due to its altitude. We keep the windows open from March through October. Each morning deep in the woods we are greeted with the song of the bird. Seated in the midst of the Appalachian Mountains we are blessed with many migrating species and find ourselves in a constant flow of winged activity. At night the tree frogs, crickets, and locust all lull us to sleep. With the exchange of summer for fall geese mark our sky with the tell tale V and our ears with the far off honk.

Not the same at our first home in St.Joseph. Our bedroom, on the river side of the house, faced a span of water that was slowly silting an inside bend. It had created a small island about 40’ away full of Purple Loosestrife (another blog I’m sure). This island marked a haven for all types of foul, far away from predators, full of nesting homes and easy access to all daily needs. However, in the fall of the year as these same geese settled for a long easy season our island became full. NO VACANCY would be the sign had this island lined the Vegas strip and not the St.Joe River. Hundreds of geese rained down on this small patch and not a mile above my head did they sing but only feet from my bed. Constantly over night did this small town brothel break into a battle of strength between two sluggers hoping to prove their worth in front of needy lady. The noise was incessant. Nights of limited sleep plagued both Lani and I. Overwhelmed were we to the point of retaliation. And after 40 years of the sweet entrance of fall being marked by the goose it now was marking a darker time.

However, that island didn’t remain quite so negative. With summer ultimately dawning so did new seasonal birds. The geese slowly went back north and what took their place were all types: blue herons, egrets and red winged black birds. I remember the boys fishing off the docks and a crane flying overhead crying out a gravelly baritone caw. The red winged black birds, perched high on a reed, sang out a song that immediately swept me away to my days raised on the South River in MD. Oh how sweet the noise of this earth, taking me back to my childhood.
I popped into Amazon.com today and did a search for ‘sounds of nature’ in the music section. 2,425 cd’s came up as options to buy. I’m obviously not the only one who loves these treats from nature. Cd’s full of waterfalls and oceans all putting people to sleep, reincarnations of the peepers and crickets, that used to sing so loud that my youngest would sleep under his pillow, can all now be bought in a collection to play in your condo high above the city streets. And Amazon, a treat for us all, blessed me with the book earlier this year, ‘Bug Music’ by David Rothenberg, where it spoke to the song of the Cicada. I was very excited about the hatching of the brood on the east coast that for me included a good read and a trip to a noisy jobsite in Northern Virginia.

However, I’m not the only one enjoying the sounds of nature these days. We have a new addition to the Department of Agriculture. This, a gift from the minds of the Animal Science / Pre Veterinarian people, is an aviary that graces our department foyer. Four little finches new to a home at the University flit around as happy as ever. Little cozy nests dawn the sides of the cage and copious opportunities for food and water litter the expanses of their new home. We are all a little excited. On Monday as I stood over a drafting table, attempting to ring home the importance of line weight on a landscape plan, my students wouldn’t stay calm. Why? Because they could hear the busy song of these four new inhabitants just down the hall. Young ladies, supposedly drawing away for my approval, looked up at me from their confines as if I was saying nothing at all. With a smile that washed away all need for explanation, waving a finger in the direction of the lobby, I lost all classroom control. We have real nature, living in our halls, singing out the song of the wood, and what could be better?

### PANFRIED KALE

- 1 whole Large Bunch Of Kale, Or 2 Regular Bunches
- 2 Tablespoons Olive Oil
- 5 cloves Garlic, Finely Minced
- Salt And Pepper, to taste
- 1/2 Lemon, Optional

1. Thoroughly rinse the kale in cold water, soaking if necessary to remove grit. Tear the kale into chunks.
2. Heat the olive oil in a large skillet over medium-high heat. Add the garlic and quickly stir it around to avoid burning.
3. Throw in the kale and use tongs to move it around the skillet. Sprinkle in salt and pepper and continue cooking until slightly wilted but still crisp, about 1 to 2 minutes.
4. Remove the kale to a plate and serve!
5. Option: Squeeze the juice of half a lemon over the top.

http://thepioneerwoman.com/cooking/2013/06/panfried-kale/#recipe-form-273882

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