

# THIS SEASON: WEEK BY WEEK

BY CRISS ROBERTS

## WEEK ONE: SPINACH.

*This Season, Week by Week, is now a regular feature on [www.EdibleIowaRiverValley.com](http://www.EdibleIowaRiverValley.com). Each week will feature a new product in season locally, including buying tips and a recipe from a local chef to get you going. This Season: Week by Week is great way to keep your kitchen strong, all season long!*

Mike Clem's family regularly ate spinach at dinner. "It was canned or frozen," said Clem, chef at the riverfront Drake restaurant in Burlington. "It looked like seaweed." Salads were leaves of pasty iceberg, with canned mandarin orange slices if mom was going upscale. It took a fresh spinach salad with hot vinaigrette dressing to change his take on both. "This dish turned me on to salad," Clem said. "Fresh spinach was a whole 'nother story."

A regular summer menu item at The Drake, Clem buys his spinach from Gerst Family Farms in Burlington. The bacon comes from Meierotto's Farm Fresh Meats, in Mount Pleasant, both regulars at farmers markets in southeast Iowa. Clem will do cooking demonstrations at the Burlington Farmers Market on the riverfront Thursdays during the summer months.

"To Sleep Well,  
**WORK WELL,**  
play well,  
**LIVE**  
& Love Well,  
...one must dine well."

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## FRESH SPINACH SALAD WITH HOT BACON VINAIGRETTE

*Courtesy of Mike Clem, the Drake Restaurant*

Serves 4

- 8 cups fresh spinach, washed and destemmed
- 2 hard boiled eggs
- 8 ounces sliced fresh mushrooms
- 4 strips bacon

### VINAIGRETTE

- ½ pound raw bacon, cut into strips
- 1 small yellow onion, diced
- ½ cup sugar
- 5 ounces balsamic vinegar
- 5 ounces standard prepared yellow mustard
- 5 ounces white wine

Whisk vinegar, mustard and wine together and set aside. Sauté bacon in a saucepan until crisp. Add onion into bacon and cook until soft. Stir sugar into pot until liquefied. Pour vinegar mixture into bacon and onions and simmer 5 to 7 minutes. Pour over spinach and toss, Garnish with sliced egg, mushrooms and bacon slices.

## GROWING LEAFY GREENS

Leafy greens, including spinach, need cold weather to germinate. With seeds often planted in sandy ground as the weather starts to thaw, these greens are among the first vegetables to appear at the early farmers' markets. Unwashed spinach can be stored in plastic bags in the refrigerator crisper drawer for three to four days, and frozen for up to eight months. Keep the leaves as dry as possible as washed spinach will wilt during storage. Rinse before eating to remove the dirt and sand that can adhere to leaves.

Look for three varieties: Savoy, semi-savoy and flat-leaf, and baby. Savoy leaves are dark green and curly. Flatleaf spinach has spade-shaped, flat leaves. Semi-savoy is a mix of the two. And baby, is just, well, baby.