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Fried Squash Blossoms with Dirtpatch Martinis

When the first of the zucchini blossoms start to appear, we treat ourselves to a plate full of them, dipped in a delicate rice flour batter and deep fried to perfection, along with a cold martini or two. The martini is made with our home made pickled okra and named after our property, "Dirtpatch" which was nothing more than a field full of dirt and weeds when we bought it.

Squash blossoms
Rice Flour
Water
Kosher salt

Harvest squash blossoms early in the morning. Gently rinse them and remove any bugs. Remove stamens and pistils.

Store in damp paper towels in the vegetable bin of your refrigerator until you are going to fry them.

When you are ready to fry them, make a batter out of rice flour and water. It should be the consistency of thin pancake batter.

Heat 2 inches of peanut oil in a deep skillet to 375 degrees on a deep-fat thermometer.

Working quickly in batches, hold the blossoms by the stem end and dip them in the batter, coating each completely. Let any excess batter drip off and fry in hot oil, turning every 1 ½ to 2 minutes, or until golden and crisp.

With a slotted spoon transfer the fried blossoms to paper towels to drain. Salt immediately and serve hot.

To make a **Dirtpatch Martini**, take a martini glass and fill it with crushed ice and ½ ounce of vermouth.

Let it sit while you put 2 ounces of icy cold gin* in a metal cocktail shaker and fill it with crushed ice. Shake until the outside of the shaker becomes icy and too cold to hold.

Dump the ice and vermouth out of the martini glass and, through the strainer, pour the gin into the now empty glass. You'll know your martini is the perfect temperature when you can actually see tiny ice crystals floating on the top of the gin.

Garnish with a whole pickled okra.

For a "Dirty" Dirtpatch Martini, take a teaspoon of the okra's pickling juice and swirl it into the martini after it is poured.

*Always keep your gin in the freezer.

Victoria Wesseler

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