

Cleo Coyle's Rapini Lunch

How to make Broccoli Rabe

Text and photos (c) by Alice Alfonsi who writes [The Coffeehouse Mysteries](#) as [Cleo Coyle](#) with her husband, Marc Cerasini.

These glorious greens are sold under many names: Broccoli Rabe (or Raab), Rapini, Rappi, Broccoletti, or Cima di Rapa. A superb superfood, it's popular in Italian cuisine for good reason. As a classic bitter green, its pungent edge is a great gastronomic complement for starchy, sweet, and cheesy main dishes like spaghetti, ravioli, lasagna, and pizza. There are many ways to prepare Rapini. Today's recipe is probably the most common way it's prepared in Italian kitchens. I just love this method, which mellows the bitterness into a nutty, flavorful bite, especially when sautéed with garlic in olive oil and finished with lemon, pepper, and grated Italian cheese. May you eat with joy and in good health! ~ Cleo

Makes 4 servings Ingredients:

1 bunch Rapini aka Broccoli Rabe (about 1 pound)

2-1/2 quarts water

1 teaspoon sea salt

24 whole garlic cloves, peeled (1-1/2 heads)

4 tablespoons olive oil

Optional finishers: Lemon slices, Pecorino Romano (grated), black pepper



Step 1 – How to Select Rapini: These greens have thick stalks like kale or collard greens and leafy tops with tiny broccoli-like florets among its leaves. My grocer sells it in 1 pound bunches. Do buy it as fresh as possible. Leaves should be bright green and not yellowing, wilted, or flowering.

Step 2 - Cut off ends: As you would with asparagus, slice off the tough ends of the stalks and toss them.

The stem is the most bitter part of the veg, which is why I also peel the remaining stems. It nicely mellows the bitter edge. Although some cooks like to roughly chop the Broccoli Rabe at this point (into 1-inch pieces), I prefer to cook and serve mine whole.



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Step 3 - Blanch and shock:

Yes, this step sounds like a pair of James Bond villains, but it's essential if you wish to mellow the bitterness. First boil a pot of water (at least 2-1/2 quarts). Toss in 1 tsp. sea salt. Smash 4 of the garlic cloves and throw into pot. Finally, add your greens and simmer 5 minutes. Strain greens and shock them by running cold tap water over them until they are no longer warm. Drain well and pat dry.



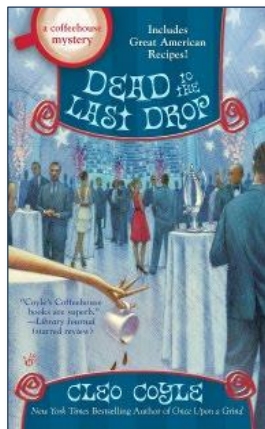
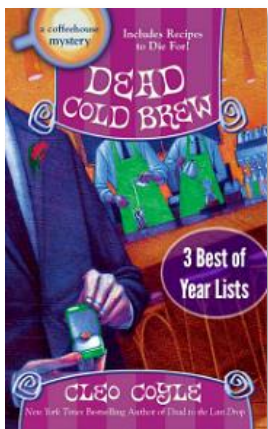
Step 4 - Heat oil and garlic: Place 4 tablespoons of olive oil into a large sauté pan and warm over medium-high heat. Add remaining 20 cloves of garlic—do not slice or smash. (*See more optional flavor ideas below.) Sauté garlic 3 minutes or until fragrant. NOTE: You do not want the garlic to brown.

***Optional flavor ideas:** In Step 4, when you throw in the whole garlic, try adding red pepper flakes for a spicy note of heat. Or add a few anchovies for an umami flavor.

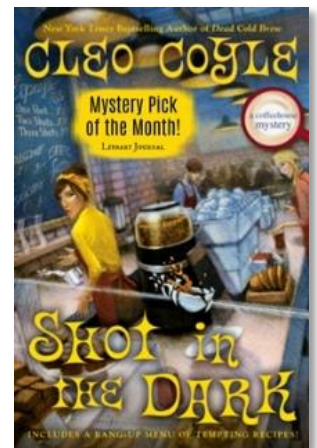
Step 5 - Sauté: Add your greens to the pan. You should hear a slight sizzling (if you do not, turn up the heat a bit). Sauté for 3 to 5 minutes, stirring continually to coat the vegetable with the garlic oil. When is it done? Test by biting. The stalks should be slightly crunchy as you bite down but giving easily as you bite. Continue cooking until texture is to your liking.



Step 6 - Serve: To finish, salt to taste. Or try a squeeze of lemon, a sprinkle of freshly grated Italian cheese Pecorino Romano or Parmesan, and a bit of ground black pepper. Now you are ready to...eat with joy! ~ Cleo



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