

THE ART OF THE KITCHEN GARDEN

By Ellen Ecker Ogden



Ellen Ecker Ogden. © 2008.

My cooking often starts with the same routine, I heat a little olive oil in a pan, chop an onion and some garlic and start to sauté. While the kitchen fills with a luscious aroma, I run to the garden to see what I can harvest. Cooking from the garden should be simple, inspired by the ingredients rather than a recipe. A countertop full of bright fresh vegetables that have just been brought in from the garden has inspired some of my most memorable meals. Capturing this moment starts in the spring, when I plan my kitchen garden.

There is an important connection between the garden and the kitchen, and while many savory herbs and tender vegetables are available at farmers' markets, planting a kitchen garden, or *potager* as the French call it, is the best way to stay connected to the source—Mother Earth. Translated, the French word *potage* means literally “a soup pot of vegetables,” yet the term *potager* carries with it a deeper historical tradition dating back to the Middle Ages when monks and nuns planted private gardens behind stone walls and high hedges. These ornamental gardens served as a retreat for