

Central Market

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Bella Verdi's Fresh Microgreens

Darrell Joseph worked in the high-tech industry for 20 years and was looking for a change. He wasn't sure what his new venture would be, but he wanted it to involve food, which is his main passion.

He was considering starting a basil farm when microgreens

grabbed his interest.

Microgreens are simply very young vegetables and leaf greens – essentially sprouts that have been allowed to grow their first set of adult leaves. They have intense flavors and can be used in to dress up salads and sandwiches or as edible garnishes.

While researching microgreens, he started asking chefs if they had a need for some that were locally grown. "And every one of them said, 'Yeah. We get them from California and they don't stay fresh long enough.'"

The lifespan of microgreens is very short. They are harvested just eight to 10 days after being planted. Baby greens, by contrast, are about 45 days old and mature greens are 65 – 80 days old. (Under top conditions, microgreens can last almost two weeks in the refrigerator.)



So growing them is a labor-intensive and fast process, without any room for error.

Darrell and his small crew operate out of an 18,000-square-foot state-of-the-art greenhouse in Dripping Springs, outside of Austin. They have a built-in system to control the amount of sunlight that gets in. They use captured rainwater that's filtered and recycled over and over (without any chemical additives) and they use insects like ladybugs to control pests. When ready for market, the tiny greens are clipped with ordinary kitchen shears. Then, the beds are re-seeded.

Bella Verdi Farms grows a small variety of greens such as mustard, tat soi, kohlrabi, arugula, broccoli, beet and purple cabbage. In addition, they grow a variety of herbs – and basil, which Darrell has considered growing exclusively.

At Central Market you'll find two microgreens mixes from Bella Verdi and broccoli and arugula microgreens as well as live basil plants.

The Asian Mix contains a blend of spicy Asian mustard, kohlrabi and tat soi while the Mediterranean mix is made up of arugula, beet greens and purple cabbage. The basil plants are sold with the root ball still

attached. You can place it in a vase or glass of water at home and pick off the leaves as you need them, or you can replant it outside.

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