

Farm to School: Highlighting Local Fruits & Vegetables



Materials to inspire your USDA Fresh Fruit & Vegetable Program

— LEAFY GREENS & SALADS —

Greens are plant leaves eaten as a vegetable and are also referred to as vegetable greens, leafy greens or salad greens. There are nearly one thousand species of plants with edible leaves. Leaf vegetables most often come from short lived herbaceous plants such as lettuce and spinach. Kale, collard greens, and Swiss chard are also examples.

History

Depending on the place and season, different types of leaves have been part of the human diet since prehistoric times. Over the centuries, many traditional leaf vegetables were replaced by leaves that are more tender, have a more neutral taste or are considered more refined. Leaves that were part of ancient traditional diets are still found in the wild, sometimes at the edge of cultivated fields or near abandoned homesteads. Generally they are found not far from inhabited places, indicating that they are the vestiges of ancient cultivated plants.

Botanical Facts

Salad greens consist of hundreds of varieties of different lettuce, a temperate annual plant of the family Asteraceae, or sunflower family. Initially, a lettuce plant will have a short stem called a rosette. When it blooms, the rosette lengthens and branches, ultimately producing several flower heads that look similar to dandelions. This process is called bolting. When grown to eat, lettuce is harvested before this bolting process begins.

Some varieties of lettuce, like iceberg, have been specifically cultivated to remove the bitterness from their leaves. These types of lettuce (often called “crispheads”) have a high water content, lighter colored leaves, and little nutrient value. Leaves with greater pigmentation contain more antioxidants and nutrients. According to the Center for Disease Control, the four main types of lettuce are butterhead (e.g., boston, bibb), crisphead (e.g., iceberg), looseleaf (e.g., red leaf, green leaf), and romaine.

GREEN	Vit. A*	Vit. C*	Vit. K*	IRON*	CALCIUM*	FIBER*	SPECIAL INFO./HOW TO PREPARE (adapted from wholefoodsmarket.com)
Beet Greens	110%	30%	436%	8%	16%	9%	One of the mildest greens, slightly sweet with very tender leaves. Wilt, steam, or sauté. Use within a day or two as these wilt quickly.
Bok Choy & other Asian greens	155%	37%	36%	5%	8%	5%	Best known for use in stir-fries. The stalks require longer cooking than leaves - add chopped stalks to pan before leaves. Also great in soups or steamed.
Chard	54%	26%	153%	11%	5%	7%	Flavor is a cross between spinach and beet greens. Trim bottom of stems. Cut thick stems from leaves, chop, & quick boil for a few minutes longer than chopped leaves.
Collards	60%	29%	440%	3%	12%	11%	Collards retain more volume when cooked than most greens. Collards take 15 - 20 min. to cook. Steam, braise, or sauté.
Kale	96%	45%	664%	4%	5%	5%	Fairly mild with peppery flavor. Stems are tough - cut or tear off leaves. Tasty chopped and added to hearty vegetable soups, steamed or sautéed.
Mustard Greens	43%	30%	262%	3%	5%	6%	Combined with other greens, mustards add sharpness to make a dish exciting. Alone, they are quite spicy. Remove stems and tough ribs. Steam or sauté for 20-20 min.
Spinach	148%	15%	500%	18%	13%	9%	Tender, sweet green leaves that cook quickly. Great raw, wilted, and sautéed, and in soups, quiches, and pasta dishes.

More about.. LEAFY GREENS

More Facts

- Lettuce, spinach and other salad greens are an important part of a healthful diet as they represent a year-round source of vitamin A, vitamin C and other nutrients.
- Red and dark green leafy vegetables are generally higher in nutrients than light-colored greens.
- Safe handling of leafy greens helps to reduce the risk of food borne illness.
- Lettuce and other leafy greens are typically cool season crops with short growing periods.
- Choose bunches of leaves with good coloring and no evidence of yellowing or insect damage. The best leaves will be crisp with no brown edges.



Spotlight on...



Mixed Greens



Lettuce



Spinach



Kale

Nutrition Facts

Leafy Greens are typically low in calories, low in fat, high in protein per calorie, high in dietary fiber, high in iron and calcium, and very high in phytochemicals such as vitamin C, carotenoids, lutein, folate and vitamin K.

Nutrition Facts

Serving Size 2 cups chopped (72g)
Servings Per Container

Amount Per Serving

Calories 20 Calories from Fat 5

% Daily Value*

Total Fat 0g 0%

Saturated Fat 0g 0%

Trans Fat 0g

Cholesterol 0mg 0%

Sodium 15mg 1%

Total Carbohydrate 4g 1%

Dietary Fiber 3g 12%

Sugars 0g

Protein 2g

Vitamin A 100% • Vitamin C 40%

Calcium 10% • Iron 0%

*Percent Daily Values are based on a 2,000 calorie diet. Your daily values may be higher or lower depending on your calorie needs:

	Calories:	2,000	2,500
Total Fat	Less than	65g	80g
Saturated Fat	Less than	20g	25g
Cholesterol	Less than	300mg	300mg
Sodium	Less than	2,400mg	2,400mg
Total Carbohydrate		300g	375g
Dietary Fiber		25g	30g

Calories per gram:
Fat 9 • Carbohydrate 4 • Protein 4

Storage

- Store in a plastic bag in your refrigerator for up to five days.
- Store away from apples, pears, and bananas as these fruits release ethylene a ripening agent that will speed the decay of the lettuce.
- Because of high water content, lettuce cannot be frozen or canned for long-term storage. It should always be eaten fresh within about 10 days of purchase.

Cooking Greens

- Wash before use and dry with a paper towel.
- Greens may be stir-fried, stewed or steamed. Many varieties are delicious eaten raw, such as lettuce or spinach.

 See RECIPES section on our website for recipe ideas