

Fall for Greens

As the air turns crisp and leaves begin to change, welcoming the fall season can also be a perfect time to welcome fresh, seasonal greens onto your plate. As schedules fill up and activities pick up pace, it's more important than ever to fuel your body with the energy it needs. One of the best ways to do that? Eating a variety of nutrient-rich fruits and vegetables, especially greens.

Greens are packed with essential vitamins and minerals that support your health and well-being. Let's explore some seasonal favorites and easy ways to enjoy them.

Collard Greens

A cold-weather crop that thrives in chilly temperatures, collard greens are rich in vitamin A, vitamin C, fiber, iron, and potassium. Try using the sturdy leaves as a wrap in place of lettuce or cook them on the stove with savory seasonings for a comforting side dish.

Spinach

Spinach is hardy enough to grow into the winter months and offers iron, calcium, iodine, folate, and B-vitamins. Blend it into a smoothie, sauté it for a warm dish, or layer it onto a sandwich for a fresh crunch.

Kale

Kale comes in varieties like Dino and Tuscan and delivers iron, fiber, folate, potassium, magnesium, and vitamin K. Toss it into soups, use it as a salad base, or bake it in the oven for crispy chips.

Arugula

Known for its peppery flavor, arugula is loaded with calcium, iron, phosphorus, potassium, sodium, zinc, and vitamin C. Mix it into salads, layer it on sandwiches, stir it into pesto, or use it as a pizza topping.

Swiss Chard

Swiss chard brings vibrant color and a healthy dose of fiber, along with vitamins A, K, C, and E, plus potassium and calcium. Add it to stews, salads, pasta dishes, or fold it into omelets and frittatas.

Cabbage

Available in green or purple, cabbage is a cruciferous vegetable rich in calcium, iron, phosphorus, vitamin B6, vitamin C, and vitamin K. Simmer it in broth with seasonings or chop it into a fresh salad with lime juice for a zesty kick.

How to Store Your Greens

Proper storage helps preserve the flavor, texture, and nutrients of your greens. Here are some simple tips:

- **Refrigerate promptly:** Most leafy greens should be stored in the refrigerator. Keep them in the crisper drawer to maintain humidity and freshness.
- **Use breathable containers:** Store greens in a perforated plastic bag or a container lined with a paper towel. This helps absorb excess moisture and prevents wilting.
- **Don't wash until ready to use:** Washing greens before storage can cause them to spoil faster. Instead, rinse them just before eating or cooking.

- Keep herbs separate: For tender greens like arugula or herbs, wrap them loosely in a damp paper towel and place them in a resealable bag.
- Freeze for later: Hardy greens like kale, spinach, and collards can be blanched and frozen for future use in soups, stews, or smoothies.

Celebrate the season by bringing fresh fall greens to your table. Whether you're simmering a hearty dish or tossing a crisp salad, autumn offers the perfect opportunity to nourish your body and savor seasonal flavors.

Healthy Spinach and Artichoke Dip

Recipe from the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics;
Stacey Antine, MS, RD, and Health Barn USA

Ingredients

4 cups water
1 6-ounce bag of fresh spinach
¼ cup fresh basil
1 15-ounce can of cannellini beans, unsalted
1 14-ounce can of artichoke hearts, unsalted (or frozen)
1 clove garlic, chopped
3 ounces low-fat cream cheese
⅓ teaspoon sea salt
⅓ teaspoon ground black pepper
½ cup + 4 tablespoons low-fat, low-sodium mozzarella cheese, shredded

Directions

Before you begin: Wash your hands.

1. Preheat oven to 350°F.
2. In a medium saucepan, boil 4 cups water. Prepare an ice bath in a large bowl. When water comes to a boil, add spinach and basil in small batches and

cook for about 30 seconds. Remove with a slotted spoon and transfer to the ice bath to stop the cooking process and retain a vibrant green color. Squeeze the water from the spinach and basil.

3. In a food processor, combine cooked greens, cannellini beans, artichoke hearts, garlic, cream cheese, sea salt and pepper. Transfer to a bowl and fold in ½ cup of mozzarella cheese.
4. Fill 4-ounce ramekins with the mixture and top each with a sprinkle of remaining cheese.
5. Bake for about 5 to 10 minutes or until the cheese on top is brown and bubbly.
6. Serve with pita chips or fresh veggies.

For a cold dip, combine beans, artichoke hearts, garlic, sea salt, pepper, spinach and basil.

Nutrition Information

Serving size: 4 ounces Serves 10 Calories: 100; Total Fat: 3 Total Saturated Fat: 2; Cholesterol: 0mg; Carbohydrate: 10g; Protein: 6g; Sodium: 180mg; Vitamin A: 15%; Vitamin C: 8%; Calcium: 10%; Iron: 10%.

Sources:

1. *USDA FoodData Central*. (n.d.-b). <https://fdc.nal.usda.gov/>
2. Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics. (2018, January 24). *Healthy spinach and artichoke dip recipe*. <https://www.eatright.org/recipes/snacks-and-sides/healthy-spinach-and-artichoke-dip-recipe>

Would you like to work with a Registered Dietitian?

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