

Greens

Rich in health-promoting vitamins and minerals, greens are a healthy addition to any meal. They are highly versatile and can be eaten raw, steamed, sautéed, boiled or braised. Add greens to soups, stir-fries, casseroles or cut into thin strips and add to your favorite dish. Eaten raw, greens contain the highest amount of nutrients, while cooked greens do lose some their nutritional content.

Belgian Endive

Also called French endive or Witloof, Belgian endive is grown in the dark to achieve creamy white leaves with very pale yellow tips. It has a tangy, deep flavor that adds a zest to salads or, when cooked, can be a subtle addition to soup or a main entrée. Its spear-shaped leaves make it a natural for dipping and it is great topped with salmon, cheese or caviar.

Bok Choy

Bok choy is rich in beta-carotene, folic acid, fiber and has a considerable amount of calcium. It is mild and sweet in flavor with long, thick white stalks and blue-green leaves. Bok choy is a natural in stir-fries and is great served raw in salads, sautéed as a side dish or added to soups. To cook mature bok choy, separate the leaves from the stalk and cut both into pieces. Baby bok choy is best when braised or steamed whole and served as a side dish.

Chard

Available in red, rainbow or Swiss varieties, chard has 306% of the recommended daily allowance of vitamin K, over 100% RDA of vitamin A, and is loaded with iron, potassium, dietary fiber and vitamin C. It has broad fan-like leaves with a crunchy stalk and a bitter, pungent and slightly salty flavor. As with beets and spinach, kin of chard, both the leaves and stems are edible. However, it is recommended that the stems be separated from the leaves. The stems stain like beets, can be stringy and tough and are often discarded. Allow more time for the stems to cook. Chard can be found in a wide variety of dishes: steamed with pasta, stuffed with vegetables, sautéed as a side dish with olive oil and tomatoes, in a creamy soup or steamed and added to omelets. It is also an excellent substitute for spinach. It is important not to cook chard in an aluminum pot, as the oxalates in the greens react with the metal and can discolor your pot.

Collards

One of the healthiest greens, collards are an excellent source of vitamins A and C as well as iron, calcium, manganese and folic acid. This green has a mild, smoky flavor that is slightly bitter. Collards have smooth, dark gray-green leaves that are relatively broad. Traditionally, collards are served with bacon or ham. Sauté collards with black-eyed peas and brown rice for a dish popular in the southern US. Good seasonings for collards include garlic, fresh ginger, dill, parsley, hot sauce, cinnamon, hot peppers, vinegar and curry. Collards are often simmered for several hours for a softer vegetable, however, they can be boiled for 20 to 30 minutes for a firmer texture. Collards are great sautéed, but steaming is not recommended because the leaves can become tough. The stems should be removed as they too are often tough.

Dandelion Greens

Meaning "Lion's Tooth" in French, dandelion greens are highly nutritious. One cup of cooked leaves contains over 200% of the RDA for vitamins A and K, and they are a great source of iron, calcium and vitamin C. Dandelion leaves have a slightly bitter, tangy flavor and are used in tossed salads with a sweet vinaigrette, steamed and flavored with lemon juice or vinegar or sautéed with olive oil and garlic.

Escarole

As a member of the chicory family, escarole's sturdy green leaves have a slightly bitter flavor. Young escarole is great in a raw salad, however, mature escarole should be cooked

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because the leaves can be tough. Very popular in soups, it can also be added to pasta bakes, bean dishes or sautéed to make a warm salad. Escarole contains a fair amount of vitamin C, folate, vitamin A, B12 and other trace minerals.

Frisée

Also called curly endive or chicory in the US, frisée is a variety of chicory. Its attractive pale green leaves are narrow and curly with a frizzy appearance and a slightly bitter taste. Frisée is often found in mesclun baby green mixes. Combine frisée with blue cheese, bacon and a light, sweet vinaigrette for a great salad. It also can be used as a cooking green in a baked casserole or pasta dish. Frisée is nutritious, containing vitamins A, C, E, K and minerals calcium, iron, phosphorus and other trace minerals.

Kale

A descendant of wild cabbage, kale tops the list with more nutritional value per calorie than almost any other food. An excellent source of vitamins A and C as well as manganese – a trace mineral which helps with energy production and plays an important role in antioxidant protection – potassium, calcium, dietary fiber and vitamin B6. Flavor can be described as earthy sweet and is great steamed for pizza or pasta, added to soups or braised with apples, walnuts and vinegar. Both the stems and leaves can be eaten and it is available in green, red or black varieties.

Mâche

Also known as lamb's lettuce or corn salad, mâche is a tender, velvety green with small spoon-shaped leaves. It has a unique mild, nutty flavor and is best used in salads. Mâche is high in beta carotene and combines well with a light dressing, Belgian endive and nuts. This delicate green is highly perishable and should be bought fresh and used within a few days after purchasing.

Mustard Greens

This spicy green, if allowed to flower, produces the seeds used to make Dijon mustard. As one might expect, it has a pungent, peppery flavor great for spicing up a dish. It can be used in salads, sautéed with lemon juice and walnuts as a side dish or added to curries and pasta dishes to add a nutritious kick. Mustard greens contain 8 vitamins, 7 minerals, dietary fiber and protein. For some, the taste is too pungent, but simply blanching the greens in salt water can reduce the bite. It is also recommended that the stems are removed, unless they will be cooked for a long time.

Radicchio

Also known as red chicory, red-leafed chicory or Italian chicory, radicchio is the primary salad green in Italy. It has a tight head of dark scarlet leaves with creamy colored ribs like cabbage. Slightly bitter with a crisp texture, radicchio is great in salads, added to several cooked dishes such as risotto or can be quartered and grilled. Olive oil, butter, Parmesan or Asiago are good partners for radicchio. As with other chicories, prepare just before serving when using in a salad, since it bruises where it has been cut.

Rapini

Also referred to as Broccoli Rabe, rapini is prized for its bitter, assertive flavor. It is a favorite in Italian cooking and is a great partner for mild foods like pasta, rice, polenta and potatoes. Strong flavors such as garlic, vinegar, anchovies, olives or sausage balance the bitterness of the green. For a common Italian dish, sauté rapini with olive oil and garlic. To use, remove the "skirt" that holds the bunch together and trim the bottom leaves. Blanch rapini to reduce the bitterness. Highly nutritious with noteworthy amounts of vitamins A, C and K as well as potassium, folic acid, iron and calcium.

Spinach

Spinach is loaded with vitamin K, containing 1110% the RDA and over 200% RDA of vitamin A. It is rich in other vitamins and minerals as well, particularly folic acid, magnesium and manganese, plus it contains more protein than most vegetables. With a slightly sweet flavor when eaten raw, it is a natural in salads. Cooked spinach has a more acidic, robust flavor which is great in lasagna, steamed and served as a side dish or added as a topping on pizza. It can also be added to egg dishes, used in making pasta, creamed, added to soup or wilted and served as a bed for a main entrée. Spinach should be thoroughly washed and the stems removed before using.

Watercress

The small, dark green leaves of watercress are prized for their savory, spicy flavor. Rich in vitamins A and C and the minerals calcium, iron and folic acid. Found in recipes around the world, like in the English watercress sandwich and French, Italian or Chinese soups. Simply trim the leaves and add to a salad mix, stir-fry, hot sauce or pasta. To mellow the flavor of watercress, combine with other strong flavors such as garlic, ginger and onion. Conversely, pasta, rice and bread accentuate the flavor.