

Kale

History

As a member of the cabbage family in Europe and Asia, kale has been present for 2,000 years. It is suggested that humans have been growing and eating kale since 600 B.C. Recordings from early Rome mention “brassica,” a term for leafy green plants, likely included kale. The spread of kale occurred during the Middle Ages, when the Italians, Scots, and Russians all began to grow differing varieties of kale. The strains became hardy enough to survive cold winters. Kale became such an important food in Scotland that in some local Scottish dialect the term “kail” refers to “food” in general. The Scots use phrases such as “come to kale” as an invitation to dinner, or “off one’s kale” to imply that someone is ill.

Today, kale grows well in California, Georgia, New Jersey, Texas, and North Carolina in the United States. As of 2012, there were 2,500 American kale farms. It grows best in cooler weather, so kale should be stored in a cool place.

Kale is a good source of vitamins A, C, and K. In fact, just one cup of kale provides more vitamin A and K than you need in a whole day. Antioxidants are found in kale, which promotes general health and well-being.

Varieties

Curly kale is green or purple, tastes like cabbage, and has a ruffled texture.

Tuscan kale is very tender when cooked, and also goes by the names Lacinato kale, dinosaur kale, and cavolo nero.

Ornamental kale is too tough to eat, but is a favorite among gardeners because of its bright and colorful decorative leaves.



Fun Facts

- Kale is a part of the Brassicaceae family along with collard greens, wild cabbage, cauliflower, broccoli, and Brussels sprouts.
- National Kale Day is celebrated on the first Wednesday of October.
- Kale is a cruciferous vegetable- it is called this because the flowers have four petals and resemble a Greek cross.
- Germans celebrate *Grünkohlfahrt* yearly, which involves eating a lot of kale.
- Kale is served with mashed potatoes in the Netherlands in the traditional dish of *stamppot boerenkool*.



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