SALAD GREENS

Healthy Serving Hints

- Add layers to your lasagna.
- Strawberries and walnuts or pecans make a great addition to a spinach salad.
- Substitute spinach in for some of the basil in your favorite pesto recipe.
- Add to scrambled eggs, an omelet, or other egg dish.
- Sautee with garlic, olive oil/butter, and seasonings for a quick side dish.
- Toss a handful into a smoothie.
- Stir into mac and cheese or any other pasta dish.
- Add to homemade pizza.

Home Grown History

All salad greens are thought to have originated in or around the Mediterranean basin or the Middle East. They are likely one of the first vegetables grown and harvested by people. In fact, pictures of lettuce appeared in Egyptian tomb paintings that date back to 79 A.D. A large variety of salad greens are grown in Wisconsin. Commonly seen greens include spinach, Swiss chard, and many types of lettuce. Specialty salad green crops such as arugula, dandelion, and kale are grown as well.

Spinach was planted in the U.S. in the early 19th century but didn't become popular until the 20th century when Popeye the Sailor Man, a well loved cartoon, made his appearance in the 1930s. Popeye gained incredible strength by eating canned spinach.

Lettuce was among the first vegetables brought to the New World by Christopher Columbus and continues to be grown across North America today. Lettuce varieties range in size, shape, and color. There are four main types of lettuce commonly grown in the Midwest: crisphead, butterhead, romaine, and leaf.

Swiss chard – Chard is actually a member of the beet family. However, it is grown for its large, crinkled leaves and fleshy stalks. Chard is one of the most beautiful vegetables. It has large green or red leaves and stalks of red, orange, white, and yellow.

Picking Produce

Select spinach leaves that are a vibrant, deep green color with no signs of yellowing. They should appear fresh and tender, not wilted. If you shop organic at all, this would be a great vegetable to add to your organic shopping list due to the heavy amount of pesticides normally used on leaves. It is also important to note the significant nutrient advantages of fresh spinach rather than frozen or canned.

This month, salad greens were purchased from:

BREAKFAST EGGS WITH SPINACH AND TOMATOES

Makes 1-2 servings

Ingredients:

- 2 tsp olive oil, divided
- 1 c grape or cherry tomatoes
- 1 bunch spinach, stems removed
- 2-4 large eggs
- Salt and pepper to season (optional)

Directions:

1. In a medium nonstick skillet, heat 1 ½ tsp oil over medium heat.
2. Add tomatoes and cook until softened, about three minutes.
3. Add spinach and cook until wilted, about two minutes, and season.
4. Transfer to a bowl, wipe out pan, and add remaining oil.
5. Add eggs and cook until whites are set but yolks are still runny, about three minutes.
6. Season if desired and serve on top of vegetables.

Recipe retrieved from http://www.marthastewart.com

Health Benefits

Lettuce is commonly eaten in the United States, but there are plenty of reasons why you should give spinach a try. Spinach is rich in vitamins, minerals, and many other health-boosting compounds. You may be surprised to learn that it may protect against cancer, and cardiovascular issues. In addition, spinach is great for digestion by easing constipation, protecting the stomach lining, and flushing out toxins. Just one cup of cooked spinach contains almost 1000% (yes, you read that right) of your daily recommended intake of vitamin K and 100% of your daily recommended intake of vitamin A. Unlike most other vegetables, the health benefits in spinach are actually increased when it is cooked. Calorie for calorie, leafy greens like spinach provide more nutrients than any other food. Cooked or fresh, it is hard to go wrong with spinach!

Fun Facts

- Americans eat about 30 pounds of lettuce every year.
- Green pigments found in vegetables can be used to create a phenomenon called "fluorescence," which is essentially the same phenomenon as neon light.
- After Popeye made his debut on January 17, 1929, spinach became the third most popular children's food after turkey and ice cream.

How many vegetables do I need?

Children 2-3 years	Children 4-8 years	Females 9-13 years	Females 14-50 years	Females 51+ years	Males 9-13 years	Males 14-50 years	Males 51+ years
1 cup	1 ½ cups	2 cups	2 ½ cups	2 cups	2 ½ cups	3 cups	2 ½ cups

The amount of fruit and vegetables you need to eat depends on age, sex, and level of physical activity. These are average recommended daily amounts for individuals who get less than 30 minutes per day of moderate physical activity. Individuals may require more or less than the recommend daily amounts depending on lifestyle and health conditions.

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