

Spinach

Arkansas Fresh

History

Spinach was grown over 2,000 years ago in Iran. The name for spinach came from the Persian word “ispanai” which means “green hand.” Ispanai later became “spanachia,” then spinach. Spinach was taken to China in 647 A.D. and to Spain in 1100. In 1806, spinach was first listed in American seed catalogs. In the 1920s, the U.S. pushed spinach commercially, with Popeye the Sailor man cartoons being a great advocate of spinach. Spinach is used as a leafy green and eaten raw in salads. It is also used as a cooked green (potherb) much like turnip greens or collard greens.

Varieties

- **Savoy:** crinkly, curly leaves with a dark green color; sold in fresh bunches at most markets.
- **Flat- or smooth-leaf:** unwrinkled, spade-shaped leaves, easier to clean than savoy.
- **Semi-savoy:** slightly crinkled leaves; offers some of the texture of savoy but is not as difficult to clean; grown for both the fresh market and for processing.

Buying & Storage Tips

- Select small spinach leaves with good green color and a crisp, springy texture.
- Fresh spinach should smell sweet, never sour or musty.
- Look for stems that are fairly thin.
- If using bagged spinach, check whether the contents seem springy when you squeeze the bag.

Preparation Tips

- Trim off roots, separate leaves and drop into a large bowl of cool water; swirl gently with hands.
- Lift out leaves, letting sand and grit settle, then empty and refill bowl. Repeat until leaves are clean.
- Pinch off the stems and midribs if they are thick and tough.
- For very crisp spinach, dry in salad spinner or shake it dry in a colander; wrap it in paper towels and refrigerate.
- Cook spinach by blanching, microwaving, sautéing or steaming.

Nutrition Information

Spinach is low in calories yet extremely high in vitamins, minerals and other phytonutrients (natural plant chemicals with human nutritional value). It contains large amounts of vitamin A and other carotenoids, phosphorus and potassium. Spinach also contains iron and calcium, although they are not well absorbed.

1 cup raw, chopped spinach

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| Calories: 12 | Fat: <1 g |
| Carbohydrate: 2 g | Protein: 2 g |
| Potassium: 312 mg | Sodium: 44 mg |
| Vitamin A: 376 RE | Calcium: 55 mg |
| Vitamin C: 16 mg | Fiber: 0.7 g |



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Spinach is a rich source of antioxidants which can protect against the effects of aging and reduce the risk of heart disease and certain types of cancer.

Recipes

Spinach Orange Salad

4 cups fresh spinach, washed and torn into small pieces
1 orange, peeled and cut into sections
½ cup almonds
½ cup croutons
Serve with honey-lime vinaigrette dressing

Toss spinach, oranges, almonds and croutons. Serve salad dressing on the side.

Calories: 148 Fat: 10 g
Protein: 9 g Fiber: 4 g
Carbohydrate: 11 g Sodium: 86 mg
Cholesterol: 0 mg

Honey-Lime Vinaigrette

¼ cup lime juice
2 tablespoons low-sodium chicken broth
2 tablespoons olive or canola oil
2 tablespoons honey
¼ teaspoon bottled minced garlic

Combine all ingredients in a jar with a tight-fitting lid. Cover and shake until ingredients are mixed well. This dressing can be stored in the refrigerator for up to one week.

Calories: 96 Fat: 7 g
Protein: 0 g Fiber: 0 g
Carbohydrate: 10 g Sodium: 5 mg
Cholesterol: 0 mg

Crustless Spinach Pie

Vegetable cooking spray
3 egg whites or egg substitute
1 cup flour
1 cup fat-free milk
¼ teaspoon fresh minced garlic or ⅛ teaspoon garlic powder
1 teaspoon baking powder
12 ounces shredded low-fat cheese
4 cups fresh, washed and chopped spinach (or one package frozen chopped spinach)

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Coat a 9" x 13" pan lightly with vegetable cooking spray. Beat eggs well. Add flour, milk, garlic and baking powder. Stir in cheese and spinach, and pour mixture into the pan. Bake for 35 minutes or until lightly browned. Makes 6 servings

Calories: 204 Fat: 4.5 g
Protein: 20 g Fiber: 1 g
Carbohydrate: 20 g Sodium: 490 mg
Cholesterol: 13 mg

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Enjoy Arkansas' Fresh Spinach