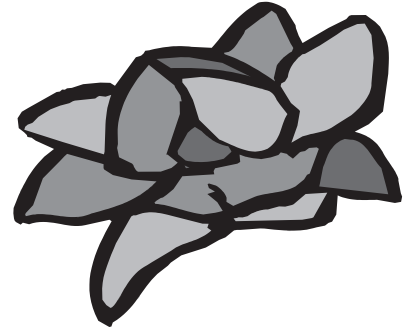


Spinach

Spinacia oleracea

On the subject of spinach: divide into little piles. Rearrange again into new piles. After five or six maneuvers, sit back and say you are full.

Delia Ephron, How To Eat Like A Child



Nutrition:

The best reason to eat fresh spinach is because it is tasty. However, as we all know, Popeye ate his spinach because of its many nutrients, including: vitamins, fiber, minerals, protein and, had he known of them, antioxidants! Spinach is particularly high in vitamins A, C and K, and in potassium, folate, and iron, while also containing significant amounts of dietary fiber, calcium, B-vitamins, magnesium, copper, zinc and manganese. Wow!

There are a few special things to note in order to prepare spinach in such ways as to maximize your body's absorption of its nutrients. Spinach contains a chemical called oxalic acid, which makes it more difficult for our bodies to absorb the iron and calcium. However, we can improve absorption of iron by eating our spinach with vitamin C-rich foods such as tomatoes or citrus fruit. Cooking spinach also deactivates the oxalic acid. Spinach also contains protein, however it is incomplete protein. By combining spinach (or any other dark, leafy green vegetable) with other sources of protein, such as rice or other grains, complete protein is made available to our bodies.

(1,2,5)

Storage:

Store spinach, unwashed, in open plastic bags in the crisper drawer of your refrigerator. If you choose to wash your spinach before storing, be sure to drain it well, as the extra moisture will cause the spinach to spoil faster. Drain, spin dry, and wrap in paper towels before storing in the refrigerator. (1,4,5)

Preparation:

Trim off the stem ends of the spinach leaves as well as the center veins of larger leaves - they can be tough. Wash spinach leaves gently in cool water at least once, although a second or third rinsing may be necessary to remove all the sand from the leaves. If you are using the fresh spinach in a salad, drain, and spin dry with a salad spinner. If steaming the spinach, there is no need to spin the spinach dry, as the moisture clinging to the leaves will be used to steam the spinach. For salads, prepare the fresh leaves by simply tearing them into bite-size pieces with your fingers. Cutting with a knife may brown the edges, which may look unsightly in a salad. However, if you are cooking the spinach, you can use a knife to slice the spinach into thin "ribbons". (1,3,4,5)

Cooking Methods:

As with many other vegetables, the trick to cooking spinach is to not overcook it!

Sauté: Spinach can be sautéed in a small amount of butter or olive oil (~1 tablespoon for 3 cups of chopped spinach). For extra flavor, sauté the spinach in some vegetable or meat stock. Cooking time: 3 to 5 minutes. In either case, cook only until the spinach is wilted and reduced in volume.

Steam: Spinach can very simply be steamed with just the water that clings to it after washing it. Cooking time: 3 to 5 minutes. Or, use a steaming basket and cook for 5 to 10 minutes. (1,3,4,5)

Tips and Suggestions:

- * Bring **wilted spinach leaves** back to life by soaking them in ice water for up to 30 minutes.
- * **Herbs** that go well with spinach include: basil, chives, curry, garlic, ginger, marjoram, onion, oregano, tarragon and thyme.
- * Serve **steamed spinach** with grated cheese, lemon juice, ham, or soy sauce.
- * Cut spinach into "ribbons" and add to **soups** at the last minute.
- * Add spinach to fresh **green salads and sandwiches**.
- * Chopped spinach is a healthy and tasty addition to **lasagna recipes**.
- * Create a low-fat version of **creamed spinach** by mixing plain yogurt into pureed spinach.
- * **Stir-fry spinach** with garlic, onion and chopped red pepper for a colorful dish

(1,3)

Yields:

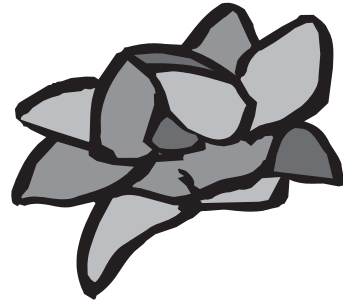
1 pound fresh =

24 cups loosely packed, washed and trimmed leaves
16 cups washed, trimmed and finely chopped leaves
3 cups trimmed and steamed (fresh or frozen) leaves

Joy of Gardening Cookbook

Spinach Salad

Karen Kremer



Ingredients

freshly picked spinach

Feta cheese, crumbled

Kalamata olives, halved or sliced

sliced radishes (optional)

orange slices, cut into small pieces

roasted pumpkin seeds

Directions

Remove stems of spinach, wash leaves thoroughly, and break up into bite-size pieces.

Use a salad spinner to remove excess moisture from the spinach and then place it in a serving bowl.

Add the remaining ingredients and toss.

Serve with your favorite vinaigrette or poppy seed salad dressing.