

Leafy Greens

Did You Know?

Why are some greens bitter?

The bitter flavor can actually be good for you! It is a sign that the plant has **phytonutrients**, which help protect your body from cancer and tumors.

Your body requires some fat to absorb certain phytonutrients. To get the best of these nutrients, put some dressing or cheese on your fresh salad, or cook up your greens with some coconut oil, butter, or olive oil!

Don't like that bitter taste?

The good news is that our likes and dislikes change, depending on what we eat. So if you eat these greens often, you will probably learn to enjoy the bitter taste... and get great health benefits, too!

From lettuce to cabbage and kale to spinach, leafy greens include all leaf vegetables that are grown and harvested for fresh market. These versatile and widely available vegetables play an important role in a healthful diet.

Health Benefits of Leafy Greens

The USDA recommends eating 5 servings of fruits and vegetables each day as part of a healthy diet. Green leafy vegetables have specific nutrients that make them an excellent vegetable choice.

Nutrient-Dense

Green leafy vegetables contain high levels of vitamins A, C, E, and K. Certain greens also provide iron, magnesium, calcium, potassium, vitamin B, and folate. These vitamins and minerals work to keep your whole body functioning optimally.

Low-Calorie

Because green leafy veggies are low-calorie, you can receive their health benefits without increasing your calorie intake by much. Eating foods like these can help you maintain a healthy body weight.

High Fiber

Fiber is important for overall health and can even help prevent certain chronic diseases. Fiber plays many roles, including:

- **Bulking up your stool.** Fiber keeps your digestive system healthy and your bowel movements regular.
- **Controlling blood sugar levels and decreasing blood cholesterol.**
- **Helping you feel full.** This makes it easier to achieve and maintain a healthy body weight.

Phytonutrients

Phytonutrients (also known as phytochemicals) are compounds found in plants that fulfill a variety of functions, like maintaining vision, boosting the immune system, and reducing disease. Since different types of phytonutrients are found in various vegetables, it is important to eat an assortment of greens for overall health.

Safe Handling of Leafy Greens

Safely handle leafy greens to reduce the risk of foodborne illness.

Purchasing: When buying greens, choose products without damaged or off-color leaves. Make sure the greens were kept refrigerated by the merchandizer.

Storing

- Do not wash greens before storing.
- Place the greens in a plastic container lined with paper towels. The paper towels help prevent rotting by soaking up excess moisture, while the container prevents bruising.
- Keep the container in the “crisper drawer” of the refrigerator. This is the most humid part of the fridge, which keeps the greens from wilting.

Washing: When ready to use, separate and individually rinse the leaves of lettuce and other greens, discarding the outer leaves if torn or bruised. Immersing leaves in a clean bowl of cool water for a few minutes helps loosen attached soil. After rinsing in a bowl or under running water, blot dry with paper towels or use a salad spinner to remove excess moisture.

Buying Greens at the Farmers' Market

Greens grow well in Colorado and are commonly sold at farmers' markets. Buying greens directly from farmers has several benefits:

- **Buying locally invests in the future of farming,** contributes to sustainable food systems, and shows appreciation for the farmers' hard work.
- **You get to know the people who grow your food.** Growers can answer questions and share information about their products.
- **Farmers' market greens are extra fresh.** Market greens are usually harvested the day before the market, giving you fresh produce straight from the field with peak flavor and maximum shelf-life.