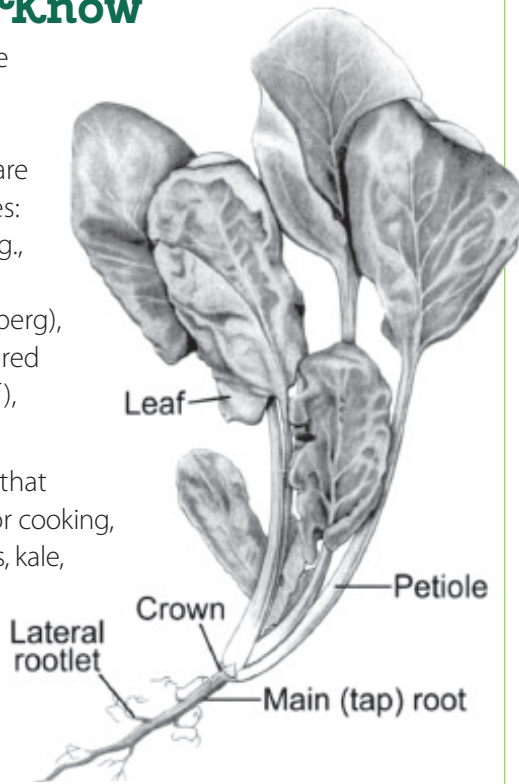


Leafy Greens

Did You Know

- While there are hundreds of varieties of lettuce, there are four main types: butterhead (e.g., Boston, bibb), crisphead (iceberg), looseleaf (e.g., red leaf, green leaf), and romaine.
- Most varieties that can be used for cooking, such as collards, kale, mustard greens, turnip greens, and bok choy, are part of the cabbage family (Brassicae). Other varieties of greens, like Swiss chard, are related to the spinach family (Amaranthae).
- The average American eats about 30 pounds of lettuce every year. That's about five times more than in the early 1900s.
- Salad greens may be one of the oldest known vegetables. There are pictures of wild forms of lettuce in Egyptian tomb paintings and written accounts of lettuce that date back to 79 A.D.
- Leafy greens are not a large part of Montana's agricultural landscape. Produce such as lettuce, spinach, collards, and chard only amount to about 13 acres of farmland across the state. However, they are easy to find at farmers markets and are great vegetables for gardens.



Gardening

Greens are perfect for growing in school gardens! Most greens (especially spinach) are quick growing, frost-tolerant, and generally easy to grow. Plant a variety of lettuce, chard, spinach, and other greens to make a "salad garden" and encourage kids to sample and compare the different types. Plant seeds directly in your garden 4-6 weeks before the last frost (be sure to read your seed packet for specifics on each variety). Lettuce can be planted in succession every two weeks to ensure a steady supply throughout the growing season.

Selection

Avoid greens that have brown, yellow, spotted, wilted, or slimy leaves.

Storage

Store greens in a plastic bag in the refrigerator for 2-5 days. Romaine and leaf lettuce should be washed and dried before storing. Store greens away from fruits that naturally produce ethylene gas (pears, apples, bananas, tomatoes, and melons) as they will quicken spoilage.

Cooking

Prior to preparing, wash greens thoroughly in running water before using to remove any soil. Cooked greens reduce in size by 75-80% compared to fresh greens.

Blanch or Boil. Remove dried or thick stems. Bring water to a boil, enough to cover the raw greens. Add greens and blanch depending on type of greens: collards, 8-15 minutes; beet greens, turnip greens, and mustard greens, 5-8 minutes; chard, 2-4 minutes; baby greens, less than a minute. Cook until desired tenderness is reached.

Braise. Cut large greens and keep small greens whole. Remove dried or thick stems. Drizzle cooking oil in a heated pan, add low-sodium seasonings if desired. Cook greens over

low heat for about 20 minutes or until desired tenderness is reached. This method is ideal for collards, chard, and kale.

Salad. Add a variety of raw greens to salads for added flavor, texture, and visual appeal. To serve tougher greens raw, massage the finely cut greens with acidic dressing. This will tenderize the greens and enhance the flavor.

Sauté. Cut large greens and keep small greens whole. Remove dried or thick stems. Drizzle cooking oil in a heated pan, add low-sodium seasonings if desired. Cook greens by stirring over high heat until desired tenderness, about 5-8 minutes. This method is ideal for spinach, collards, chard, bok choy, and mustard greens.

Season. To enhance flavor, season with basil, bay, celery seed, garlic, oregano, tarragon, or thyme.

Smoothie. Add fresh greens such as chard, spinach, or kale to smoothies for a nutrition boost.

Soup or Entrée. Add greens to soups and entrees such as lasagna, quiche, or pizza.

Steam. Remove dried or thick stems. Place greens in a pan with a small amount of water and low-sodium seasonings. Cook on medium heat for 2-4 minutes (depending on size and age of greens), or until desired tenderness.

Adapted from the Leafy Greens Food Fact Sheet developed by Montana State University Extension. For the full fact sheet and other resources, visit: <https://nutrition.msuextension.org/>.

Recipes

Easy as 1,2,3 Smoothie Recipe

This recipe is great for improvisation. The types of fruit, berries, or greens can be changed to suit your liking!

Developed by: Erin Jackson, Gallatin Valley Farm to School

Servings

6

Ingredients

2 cups fresh greens
4 cups cold water
6 cups fruit

Preparation

1. Add greens, water, and berries/fruit to blender in that order. If greens are put in last it will be difficult to blend.
2. Blend until smooth, stopping to stir ingredients or scrape sides of blender as needed.

Simply Snazzy Salad

This salad is an easy and fun recipe for students to help prepare for any occasion! Experiment with different types of greens, or mix them for more colors and flavors!

Developed by: Kirsten Gerbatsch, FoodCorps service member

Ingredients

7 cups any type of salad greens or mixed greens
1/3 cup carrots, thinly sliced
2/3 cup dried cherries or cranberries
2/3 cup walnuts, chopped
3 Tbsp cup balsamic vinegar
1/3 cup olive oil
1 Tbsp Dijon mustard
2 tsp honey

Servings

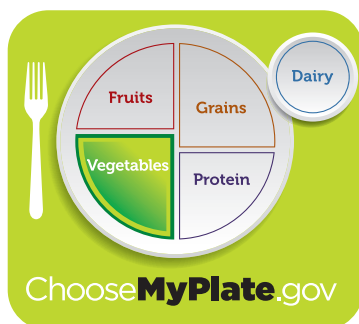
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Preparation

1. Place greens, carrots, cranberries, and walnuts into a large mixing bowl.
2. In a small bowl, add balsamic vinegar, olive oil, mustard, and honey. Whisk ingredients together using a fork or whisk until smooth and evenly mixed.
3. Right before serving, pour dressing over the salad in the large mixing bowl. Gently toss the salad to coat all the ingredients.

Nutrition Information

As a general rule, the more green or vibrant the type of greens, the more vitamins and minerals it contains. While leafy greens have different nutritional profiles, most greens are good sources of folate, vitamin A, vitamin C, calcium, and potassium. Most greens also provide vitamin K, which helps the body stop cuts and scrapes from bleeding too much and starts the healing process.



Activities

Same and Different: Sorting Leafy Greens

Adapted from: STEPS Inc. and Lycoming College Farm to Head Start Harvest of the Month

Montana Early Learning Standards

- 4.5–Reasoning and Representational Thought
- 4.10–Number Sense and Operations
- 4.12–Data Analysis
- 4.15–Scientific Thinking and Use of the Scientific Method

Description

The students will be able to identify similarities and differences and sort different kinds of lettuce. Students will also be able to count and identify how many pieces of lettuce they have.

Supplies

- A variety of leafy greens of different sizes, shapes, and colors (may include lettuces, spinach, arugula, mustard greens, bok choy, etc.)
- Bowls (enough for each table)

Directions

- Sort a mixture of different kinds of leafy greens into bowls for the students
- Have all students wash their hands.
- Give each small group of table of students a bowl of mixed leafy greens.
- Explain to students that there are many different types of leafy greens and you want them to see how some types are similar and some are different.
- Have students explain what it means if something is similar and what it means if something is different.
- Ask students to identify what is similar about two objects in the room and explain why. Do the same with two objects that are different.
- Have the students sort the lettuce into piles based on what they see are similarities and differences.
- Have students tell you why they chose to group the pieces of lettuce the way they did.
- Have students count how many pieces of lettuce are in each pile.
- Ask students if they think the greens that are different colors or shapes will taste the same or different.
- Have them try two different greens and ask them which one they prefer and if their prediction about them tasting the same or different was correct.

Extend the Fun

Leafy Prints: Have each child create a leaf print by sandwiching a leaf inside a folded piece of paper and coloring over it with a colored pencil. Have the children look at the leaf print and notice the stem, outline, and any veins of the leaf that are visible. Compare prints of different types of leaves to see different shapes and textures.

Grow Our Own: Grow romaine lettuce from a romaine heart stump by placing the stump in a shallow dish filled with water and placing in a sunny windowsill. Change water daily and have children observe and draw the changing lettuce.

Leafy Greens on My Plate: Using the MyPlate poster discuss what food group leafy green belong to. What other foods are in this food group? Why is this food group important for us to eat?



Frisee Lettuce



Watercress



Chard

Book Nook

From Seed to Plant, by Gail Gibbons
Oliver's Vegetables, by Vivian French
Plants on My Plate, by Cathy Smith
The Tiny Seed, by Eric Carle



Dig Deeper

For sources and photo credits along with more recipes, lessons, quick activities, resources, and guides, visit: mtharvestofthemonth.org.



Bibb Lettuce



Spinach



Red Oak Leaf

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The Montana Harvest of the Month program showcases Montana grown foods in Montana communities. This program is a collaboration between Montana Farm to School, Office of Public Instruction, Montana Team Nutrition Program, National Center for Appropriate Technology, Montana State University Extension, Gallatin Valley Farm to School, FoodCorps Montana, and Montana Department of Agriculture. More information and resources are available at: mtharvestofthemonth.org.

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