



Better Living for Texans Newsletter

March 2019

Going Green

People have been eating leafy greens for thousands of years. It wasn't until the first Africans arrived in North America in the early 1600s that America got its first real tastes of dark green leafy vegetables, which they grew for themselves and their families. Over the years, cooked greens developed into a traditional African American food. Ultimately, they became essential in Southern regional diets and are now enjoyed nationwide.

Why Eat Green Leafy Vegetables

Dark green leafy vegetables are great sources of nutrition. Salad greens, kale and spinach are rich in vitamins A, C, E and K, and broccoli, bok choy and mustard are also rich in many of the B-vitamins. These vegetables contain an abundance of antioxidants that protect cells and play roles in blocking the early stages of cancer. They also contain high levels of fiber, iron, magnesium, potassium and calcium. Furthermore, greens have very little carbohydrates, sodium and cholesterol.

Perhaps one of the most appealing benefits of dark green leafy vegetables is their low calorie and carbohydrate contents. These features make them an ideal food to achieving and maintaining a healthy body weight. Adding more green vegetables to a balanced diet increases the intake of dietary fiber which, in turn, regulates the digestive system and weight management.

The Dietary Guidelines for Americans recommends increasing average intakes of fruits and vegetables, particularly those that provide more vitamins, minerals and fiber. Dark leafy greens fulfill this need. Many varieties of greens are available—the most popular are collards, mustard greens, turnip greens,



chard, spinach, and kale. There are many ways to enjoy a meal with leafy greens:

Make a salad: Perk up salads with small tender leafy greens such as romaine lettuce, spinach and arugula mixed with different kinds of tomatoes, cucumbers and carrots.

Wrap it up: Make a wrap with tuna, chicken or turkey and add romaine lettuce, spinach, arugula, and other veggies for some extra flavor.

Add to soup: Add greens with larger, tougher leaves such as collard greens, kale or mustard greens into your favorite soup.

Stir-fry: Add chopped spinach, bok choy or broccoli to chicken or tofu stir-fried with olive or canola oil with some garlic, onion or ginger.

Steamed: Steaming collard greens, mustard greens, kale or spinach until they are slightly soft.

In an omelet: Add steamed broccoli and/or spinach to an omelet for a vitamin and iron rich meal.

How to Fresh Select Leafy Greens

Choose fresh, crisp, green bunches with no evidence of insect damage.

How to Store Fresh Leafy Greens

Loosely wrap greens in damp paper towels. Refrigerate in plastic bag for use within three to five days.

Article Source: Adapted from the USDA Agriculture Research Service, *Dark Green Leafy Vegetables*, by Lin Yan
Photos Source: <https://unsplash.com/>

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Local Events

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Recipe of the Month

Recipe Source: University of Nebraska Extension Nutrition Education Program

Chicken Florentine (4 servings)

Ingredients

- 4 cups firmly packed baby spinach leaves, washed with stems removed, or 1 (10 oz.) package frozen, chopped spinach
- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- 1 teaspoon dried and crushed or 2 teaspoons fresh thyme
- 2 cloves garlic, peeled and chopped
- ½ cup onion, finely chopped
- 1 tablespoon flour
- 1 cup low-sodium chicken broth
- 4 grilled or roasted skinless chicken breasts, shredded or chopped
- 2 lemons, to yield 2 tablespoons grated lemon peel and 4 lemon wedges for garnish



Directions

1. Place spinach in a large skillet over medium heat. Cover and cook until spinach is wilted or frozen spinach is heated through. The spinach should be a dark, rich green color. Do not overcook. Remove spinach and drain well.
2. In the same skillet, heat oil, thyme, garlic, and onion. Sauté until onion is transparent. Stir in flour until it disappears. Add broth and stir continuously until a thickened sauce is formed. Return chopped spinach to the sauce and mix well. Heat through.
3. Stir half the chicken into the sauce.
4. To serve, spoon equal amounts in four small casseroles. After portioned, top each with part of the remaining chicken and ½ Tbsp grated lemon peel. Place in preheated 300°F oven for 10 minutes. Serve each with a lemon wedge.

Nutrients Per Serving: 160 calories, 6 g total fat, 0.5 g saturated fat, 22 g protein, 8 g carbohydrates, 2 g dietary fiber, 1 g total sugars, 0 g added sugars, and 470 mg sodium

Total Cost: \$\$\$\$

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