

**Onions
Leeks
Spinach
Lettuce**

Seasonal Eating

June

Pep Up Your Salad

THIS MONTH I USED THE FEATURED PRODUCE ON THESE DAYS:

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Salads are a great way to incorporate lettuce and other greens into your daily menus. But put away that image of bland, whitish greens drowned in dressing. Instead think flavorful greens with interesting textures and darker colors. In general, the darker the color the more nutritious the lettuce.

Butterhead



Bibb and Boston lettuce are in this group with a soft, delicate texture and mild flavor.

Serving suggestion: Raspberry vinaigrette dressing, mandarin orange sections, toasted sliced almonds and fresh chopped herbs.

Crisphead



This group includes the popular iceberg lettuce that grows in tight heads with a crisp texture. It is the most popular type of lettuce but the least nutritious and is very mild in flavor.

Serving suggestion: Thousand Island dressing, sliced cucumber, quartered hard cooked egg and shredded Monterey Jack cheese.

Leaf Lettuce



This lettuce grows with loosely gathered leaves and can be green or red with a mild flavor and somewhat crisp texture.

Serving suggestion; Warm bacon vinaigrette dressing, sliced mushrooms and very thin red onion rings.

Romaine



Romaine has closely packed leaves in an elongated head with good flavor and a crunchy texture. It is the lettuce for Caesar salad.

Serving suggestion: Balsamic vinaigrette dressing, cooked chicken slices, sliced black olives, grape tomato halves and croutons.

For added flavor try mixing in these other salad greens:



Curly Endive (Frisee)



Arugula (Rocket)



Spinach

Did You Know?

- Americans eat about 30 pounds of lettuce every year. That's about 5 times more than what we ate in the early 1900's.
- Rinsing cut onions under running water for a few seconds will help take away the sharp flavor.
- Leeks will continue to grow very slowly after harvesting. Try to use within a month, but the fresher the better.
- In the 1920's the U.S. pushed spinach consumption by using the Popeye the Sailor cartoon as an advocate.

Spinach Provençal

- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- 1/4 cup minced onion or shallot
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 cup peeled, diced and seeded tomatoes
- 2 teaspoons fresh rosemary, chopped
- 1 teaspoon black pepper
- 1/2 cup chicken broth
- 1 cup red wine
- 2 tablespoons cornstarch
- 1/4 cup cold water
- 2 pounds fresh baby spinach

In a saucepan, heat the olive oil. Add the onion and garlic and simmer until onions are glassy. Add tomatoes, rosemary, pepper, chicken broth and wine and bring to a simmer. Simmer for 10 minutes or more and then thicken with the cornstarch dissolved in cold water. Place baby spinach into a large sauté pan and top with hot Provençal sauce. Toss lightly until spinach starts to wilt and cook. Continue to cook and fold spinach with sauce until completely wilted and blended but still bright green. Serve at once. This is great under a grilled salmon fillet or boneless chicken breast.

Featuring: Leeks

Leeks are related to garlic and onions but the flavor is milder than either of these. They are used more often in European countries than the U.S. Looking like a large green onion, most people use the white and light green sections. The dark, flat leaves can be tough. You can use leeks raw or cooked but most often they are cooked. Leeks are often used in potato leek soup, sautéed and added to savory tarts or quiches, or added to stir-fries. As leeks grow, sand gets trapped between the layers so slice the leek lengthwise and flush water between the layers to flush out the sand. Sliced or chopped leeks can be swished in a bowl of water and then left to let the sand drop to the bottom.



Dried Cherry and Blue Cheese Salad

- 1 tablespoon Dijon style mustard
- 1/4 cup balsamic vinegar
- 1/4 cup rice wine vinegar
- 3/4 cup vegetable oil
- 1 teaspoon dried basil
- 1/4 teaspoon black pepper
- 1/4 teaspoon kosher salt
- 1/4 cup maple syrup

- 1 head red leaf lettuce
- 1 head Bibb lettuce or Boston lettuce
- 1 1/3 cups dried red cherries (about 6 ounces)
- 8 ounces blue cheese, crumbled
- 10 ounces bacon, cooked and crumbled
- 1 cup toasted pine nuts

For the dressing: Whisk together the mustard and vinegars. Slowly whisk in the vegetable oil. Stir in the basil, pepper, salt and maple syrup. When ready to serve, tear salad greens into bite-size pieces and toss with enough dressing to coat. Top with cherries, blue cheese, crumbled bacon and pine nuts.

Super Spinach

Popeye was right when he sang “I’m strong to the finish, ‘cause I eats me spinach”. This powerhouse of a vegetable is full of a sailor’s best nutrients from muscle building iron to scurvy preventing vitamin C. Look at what just 1 1/2 cups of shredded spinach gives you:

- 20% of dietary fiber
- 70% of vitamin A
- 25% of vitamin C
- 20% of iron

It is also high in folate and a good source of magnesium. Spinach is also one of the highest sources (along with kale) of lutein—a phytochemical associated with eye and skin health. It is cholesterol free, fat free and low calorie as well. So whether you eat it raw in a salad, tucked into a sandwich, lightly sautéed under fish, layered into a lasagna or added to bean soup, this vegetable is worth its weight in nutrition.