

Extension

Seasonal Eating Whitney Danhof, Extension Agent

Kale: The Hot New Green November 2013

“Come to Kale!” In Scotland, kale became so popular that this phrase meant an invitation to dinner. This superfood would do well to become so popular here in the United States. It is packed with Vitamins A and C, calcium, potassium and many, many phytochemicals that help to lower cholesterol and prevent certain types of cancers. But while it is a great nutritional powerhouse, the good news is that kale can be a tasty addition to many types of hearty fall dishes too.

Kale can be eaten raw or cooked. Most of us think of cooked greens when we think of kale and it is delicious when steamed or microwaved and tossed with a vinaigrette of olive oil, garlic and lemon juice. It can also be added to other recipes. I like to add kale to hearty soups with beans or cubes of butternut squash or potatoes. Last year I



bought some red kale at the Franklin Farmers’ Market and made a delicious risotto with short grain rice, kale, mushrooms and Parmesan cheese. Risotto is one of my favorite dishes and is basically a short grain rice (very starchy) that is cooked by adding a couple of ladles of hot broth at a time and stirred while the liquid is absorbed until the rice is tender. This brings out the starch and makes a beautifully creamy texture. You can flavor it any way you wish. Pasta dishes are another perfect pairing for kale. The recipe below combines the kale with elbow macaroni, tomatoes and sausage. It makes a hearty family dinner, easy enough for a weeknight.

The other day I found a package of baby kale that I used raw in a salad with spinach, apples and toasted pecans. It added a little bitter contrast to the sweet spinach and apples and a little chewier texture. I have also made salads with very finely sliced kale that I massaged a little to break down the fibers and added oranges and sunflower seeds.

Choose kale that is fresh looking and not wilted. It should be green without any yellowing or spots. Place it in a plastic bag, squeezing out as much air as possible and store in the coldest part of the refrigerator for up to five days. The longer you store kale the more bitter it becomes. Be sure to wash it well just before using to remove any sand or grit.

So don’t miss out on the nutrition and flavor packed hearty greens like kale this fall and winter. They will add a whole new dimension to your fall menus.

For more ideas on using seasonal produce, the risotto recipe and more, visit the Bedford County Extension website (<https://utextension.tennessee.edu/bedford>) and click on Seasonal Eating. The Seasonal Eating Cooking Demonstration on “Harvest Thanks” will be on Wednesday, November 20 at 12:00 noon at the Extension Office. Call the Office at 684-5971 to sign up and bring \$7.00 to class to cover the samples.

Pasta with Italian Sausage and Kale

4 links Italian sausage
1 cup elbow macaroni
1 onion, chopped
3 cloves garlic, pressed
2 (15 1/2-ounce) cans diced tomatoes, undrained
3/4 -1 bunch kale, stems removed and chopped
1/4 teaspoon black pepper
1/2 cup grated Parmesan cheese

Place sausages in a skillet, cover and cook until caramelized on the outside and cooked through. Remove to a cutting board and slice. Cook macaroni in boiling, salted water until just tender. Drain and set aside. Meanwhile add onion and garlic to drippings in the sausage pan and sauté until translucent. Add tomatoes, kale and pepper. Turn heat to medium high and reduce the liquid. Add the macaroni and sausages and heat together. Pour into serving bowl and sprinkle with cheese.