

**Seasonal Eating**  
**Whitney Danhof, Extension Agent**

**Kale is Calling for Fall**  
**October 2012**

As the air turns cooler and nights are chilly, my thoughts turn to hearty soups that warm the body and stick to the ribs. Chili is the standard for fall and winter, especially for Halloween evening. But this year why not try something a little different - a hearty White Bean and Kale Soup?

Kale is one of my favorite greens to cook with in the fall as the cooler weather makes it grow well and some say a frost actually makes it sweeter. A member of the cabbage family, there are three common cooking types of kale. Curly kale is the easiest to find in the grocery stores with its super frilly edges. Dinosaur (also known as Tuscan, Nero and Lacinato) kale has an elongated leaf with a pebbly texture. Red Russian or Red Winter kale resembles large oak leaves with a soft sage color and red veining. When shopping, look for dark colored bunches with small to medium leaves and avoid brown or yellowed leaves. While the cut up, bagged kale is a convenience, I find that the pieces often have the tough part of the stem left so I like to buy the bunches and cut out the stem and middle vein. Sand and grit get trapped in the leaves, so wash them very carefully under running water.



Kale has so many nutritional benefits that it is considered a super food – full of nutrients like vitamins A, C and K, antioxidants, calcium, fiber, potassium and more. In fact, many organizations say it is one of the healthiest foods you can eat.

You can use kale raw in salads, steamed, braised or even baked into crispy chips (toss with a little oil and salt and bake at 350 for 10 minutes or until crispy)! Try adding it to pasta or stir fry with some chicken and a bottled sauce. Sauté it with garlic for a side dish or add it to a pot of beans. Actually, kale became so popular in Scotland that “come to kale” was an invitation to dinner.

For my dinner, I made a White Bean and Kale Soup. This is a flavorful, brothy soup filled with Italian sausage, beans and kale. It is perfect with a shower of grated parmesan cheese on top and a thick slice of country artisan bread on the side to soak up some of the juice. I used a mild Italian sausage and added just a touch of cayenne pepper. If you are a spicy fan, try using the hot Italian sausage and eliminate the cayenne. If you have some

leftover cooked white beans, use those instead of the canned beans.

No matter how you choose to use your kale, adding it to your weekly menus will bring a powerhouse to your plate and a delight to your palate.

The Bedford County Farmers' Market is open Thursdays at 3:00 p.m. at the Celebration Pavilion. For more ideas on using seasonal produce, visit the Bedford County Extension website (<https://utextension.tennessee.edu/bedford>). The Seasonal Eating Cooking Demonstration on Roots and Greens will be held on Wednesday, October 17 at 12:00 noon at the Extension Office. Call the Office at 684-5971 to sign up and bring \$5.00 to cover the samples.

#### White Bean and Kale Soup

- 1/2 pound mild bulk Italian sausages
- 2 cloves garlic, pressed
- 1 carrot, finely diced
- 2 stalks celery, finely diced
- 1/2 onion, chopped
- 1 (15 1/2-ounce) can diced tomatoes, undrained
- 1 (15 1/2-ounce) can great northern beans, undrained
- 1/2 bunch kale, stems removed and chopped
- 1/8 teaspoon cayenne pepper
- 1/8 teaspoon black pepper
- 1/2 teaspoon Italian seasoning

In a Dutch oven or medium stock pot, cook the sausage, garlic, carrot, celery and onion over medium heat until the sausage is browned and vegetables are tender. Add the tomatoes and beans and stir to combine. Add the kale, cayenne, black pepper and Italian seasoning. Simmer for 10-15 minutes until kale is wilted and flavors are combined.