

Seasonal Eating
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Garden Greens
June 2025

My Dad has always enjoyed growing plants and having a garden. I remember eating sugar snap peas fresh off the vines and growing rhubarb in Utah for pies. Now he lives in a condo in Alabama and has a landscaping bed along the back porch with bushes in it. So this spring he decided to grow some garden produce in the space behind the bushes and in some containers. In May, some of the produce started coming in like kale, romaine lettuce, spinach, spring onions and radishes. It is amazing how much you can get off of just a little space. We made a salad for dinner but since he still had so much baby kale, he sent me home with a bag full.

Kale is a cool season leafy green, usually seen in the spring and fall in our area. Baby kale is quite tender while the older larger leaves are more fibrous. The stem down the center of the leaf can be tough, so I usually strip it out, leaving just the leafy part. The kale leaves can be used raw in salads (especially the baby kale) or cooked. The leaves retain some of their texture when cooked, kind of between the texture of cooked spinach and collards.

You can simply sauté torn or roughly chopped kale in a skillet with some olive oil or butter, salt and pepper until it cooks down to your desired texture. Or you can dress it up with balsamic vinegar or spice it up with red pepper flakes or garlic. You can also add other vegetables such as onion or mushrooms or even fruits like chopped apples. In the recipe below, mushrooms and red onion are added along with bacon, vinegar and a little maple syrup. A perfect side to grilled chicken or pork chops. You can also use kale in dishes that you would add spinach such as in a quiche or soup or with pasta in a cream sauce.

Not only is kale easy to grow and versatile to cook with, it is a powerhouse of nutrition. It is high in vitamins A and C along with calcium, potassium and fiber. However, it is also very high in vitamin K so check with your medical provider if you are on blood thinners or have problems with blood clotting before adding a lot of kale to your diet.

From just a garnish for the salad bar table to a star on the dinner plate, kale has come a long way over the past few years and makes a delicious and nutritious addition to your family meals. Give kale a try.

For more information and recipes check out the Seasonal Eating page at bedford.tennessee.edu.



Kale with Bacon and Mushrooms

2 slices bacon
4 ounces mushrooms, sliced
1/4 large red onion, sliced
5 cups stemmed and chopped kale
1/3 cup low sodium chicken broth
1 tablespoon apple cider vinegar
1 teaspoon maple syrup

Cook bacon in a Dutch oven over medium-low heat until crisp. Remove from pan and crumble. Increase heat to medium. Add mushrooms and onion to drippings in pan and sauté until tender. Add kale and cook 2 minutes

or until kale begins to wilt, stirring occasionally. Add broth and cover and cook 4 minutes or until tender, stirring occasionally. Stir in vinegar and syrup. Sprinkle with crumbled bacon and serve immediately.