



## Arugula – The Green Rocket

Written by Jill Grunewald and published in *tastebud* magazine, June 2008

### tastebud

The first greens of the season have emerged and leafy salads are a common and welcome antidote to winter's heavier dishes. As our days get warmer, many of us naturally gravitate towards spring's green offerings, which are restorative, cleansing, and offer us a light and flexible energy that is perfect for the longer days of the season.

I'm often asked what the best way is to shake up the green regime without adding heaviness to a salad. While it's true that various nuts, seeds, and fruit will add fresh flavor and essential nutrients, my first recommendation is always arugula! Variety is the spice of life, after all, and what better way to add spark and punch to your salads than to incorporate this naturally spicy, sharp, tangy green? With a bit of a musky aroma and a distinct peppery taste, like a radish, it's wonderful as an add-in to your usual salad greens and delicious on its own as a more daring option.

#### A Name for Every Day of the Week

Indigenous to the Mediterranean region, arugula (also called rocket, eruca, rugula, rucola, ruchetta, and roquette) belongs to the mustard family, but is not as bitter as mustard or turnip greens. In Italy, it was long considered a peasant food, where it grows wild, but has since been greatly valued in Europe for its flavor-enhancing quality and versatility. As its popularity in the U.S. has increased, it has emerged from specialty markets into farmers markets, mainstream grocery stores, and restaurant menus.

#### Plays Well With Others

Arugula is easy to introduce into everyday meals. It blends beautifully with berries, avocado, and citrus, and the peppery flavor makes it a great enhancement to stir-fries. The nutty element is a welcome alternative to lettuce on sandwiches, and it can be used as a fresh herb; many trendy restaurants are now substituting basil with arugula in their pesto recipes. According to Johnna Albi and Catherine Walthers, authors of *Greens Glorious Greens!*, "Just as parsley or watercress add flavor and visual appeal to dishes, arugula can be added to pastas, soups, and vegetable and grain dishes like potato salad, tabouli, coleslaw, or carrot salad. It provides a green sparkle and that unmistakable light spiciness that subtly elevates these everyday salads."

Next time you're looking to wake up your taste buds and add potency and pow to your salad scheme (and other dishes), try these savory leaves. The unique flavor of this special green is sure to get you hooked.

# HEALTHFUL ELEMENTS



## Arugula:

- Surpasses romaine and watercress in beta carotene, calcium, and vitamin C
- Outdoes kale and collard greens in calcium content
- Fights cancer
- Used as digestive tonic
- Moves stuck energy
- Oil from seeds long considered an aphrodisiac in Europe

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