



Glorious Greens

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The color green is associated with spring, the time of renewal, refreshment, and vital energy. In Asian medicine, green is associated with emotional stability, creativity, and physiological and psychological enlightenment. When you nourish yourself with leafy greens, you feel strengthened and nurtured and foods that make you unhealthy become less desirable and are naturally crowded out.

When most people hear “leafy green vegetables,” they probably think of iceberg lettuce. However the ordinary, pale crunchies in restaurant salads don’t boast the power-packed goodness or taste (pass the ranch dressing!) of other darker greens, most of which our Western diets are unfortunately lacking.

All green vegetables play a critical role creating good health, yet they are sadly the food most absent from our modern diets. Many folks, especially children, wrinkle their noses and eschew these wonder foods. But greens don’t have to be a food eaten under duress as if to fulfill an unwelcome dietary requirement to maintain good health. (This behavior is unhealthy in and of itself, but that’s a story for another day.) These strength-building powerhouses are high in nutrients, cook quickly, and taste oh-so-delicious. Savory greens can be cooked in a myriad of ways to satisfy your taste buds and leave you feeling great and craving more.

Most leafy greens are chock full of magnesium, potassium, phosphorous, and zinc. They’re also packed with vitamins A, C, and E, all considered antioxidants. Antioxidants neutralize free radicals, the unstable, cancer-promoting oxygen molecules that have been shown to cause obesity, diabetes, cancer, heart disease, and immune system suppression. Additionally, the chlorophyll found in greens cleanses and tones the blood.

Leafy greens are also great sources of fiber and important minerals, especially calcium and iron. The media has bombarded us with the recent milk campaign, attempting to make us think that milk and dairy are our only viable sources of calcium. Greens are very high in nondairy calcium, especially kale, dandelion greens, collards, parsley, turnip greens, and watercress.

Numerous nutritional studies show that dark green leafy vegetables may be our most potent weapon against cancer and other degenerative diseases. Lee Wattenberg, “prevention pioneer” and medical professor at the University of Minnesota states, “Diets that are rich in vegetables and fruits are protective against many cancers...a fairly large number of prevention compounds have been found in fruits and vegetables. When you look at the totality, it’s quite impressive.”

HEALTHFUL ELEMENTS



Catherine Walthers, author of *Greens Glorious Greens!* and former food editor for *Natural Health* magazine states, “Dark leafy green vegetables pack a powerful nutrition punch you could not fully replicate by taking nutritional supplements. This is because greens contain not only traditional nutrients important in maintaining good health, but also a lengthy list of micronutrients—often called phytochemicals—thought to protect against cancer and other diseases.”

According to Gene Giunti, registered dietitian, “You can’t really isolate these compounds from vegetables and expect them to work. There are literally hundreds of these phytochemicals. To really get the maximum benefit, you want to eat the whole foods.”

The lungs and respiratory system also greatly benefit from these beautiful foods. According to Steve Gagne, author of *Energetics of Food – Encounters with Your Most Intimate Relationship*, this is because “Greens’ role in nature is to breathe.” Most greens grow up and out and are expansive, whereas root vegetables grow down into the soil and are more dense and contractive. Leafy greens grow fast and heal fast.

I challenge you to experiment with some lesser-known greens, such as kale, bok choy, broccoli rabe (also called raab or rapini), watercress, mustard greens, beet greens, arugula, frisee, mesclun, and other exotic-looking lettuces. Find ones you love and eat eat eat! There is no shortage of exciting and enticing ways of getting your glorious, greeny goodness. Try a variety of methods: steaming, boiling, sautéing in oil, water sautéing, pressed salad, and waterless cooking.

Please note that spinach, Swiss chard, and beet greens are best eaten in moderation due to the oxalic acid content. Oxalic acid depletes calcium from the bones and teeth and can lead to osteoporosis. Cooking these vegetables with richer foods such as tofu, seeds, nuts, beans, butter, animal products, or oil will balance the effect of the acid.

So rejoice, greens are nothing to be afraid of or (or bored with)! These luscious leaves and trunks will build your internal rain forest and create serious strength. They will love your body and make you feel like you’ve been missin’ out on one of nature’s wonders. Remember, greens were Popeye’s secret weapon, and they can be yours too.

What you’ll gain from going GREEN:

- subtle, light and flexible energy
- cancer prevention
- inflammation reduction
- strengthened immune system
- lifted spirit and elimination of depression
- removal of drug & toxin deposits
- improved circulation
- antiseptic qualities
- anti-radiation
- digestive enzymes
- trace minerals
- blood purification
- promotion of healthy intestinal flora
- improved liver, gall bladder and kidney function
- clearing of congestion
- strengthened lung and respiratory system
- osteoporosis prevention