

## Green Leafy Vegetables: A Natural Energy Booster

Ahhh...dark leafy green vegetables. Do you know that they are the number one item missing from most American diets? Why? In our busy society, focused on getting more done in record time with fewer resources, our healthy eating habits often fall by the wayside. Most of us don't eat enough vegetables to begin with and getting in 5-7 servings a day is a pipedream for most. Throw in the additional task of making sure that at least some of them are green and leafy, and we've lost even more potential veggie eaters to iceberg lettuce and tasteless tomatoes.

But the truth is, with relatively minimal effort and a dose of creativity, anyone can create delicious and nutritious dishes that pack a powerful punch. What's so great about greens? Let us count the ways...

### A Nutritional Powerhouse

Greens such as kale, collards, spinach, and Swiss chard are bursting with important vitamins and minerals to keep us strong like vitamins A, C, E and K. In addition, greens are full of calcium and provide a tasty and low fat alternative to dairy products. Moreover, greens pack a powerful punch with abundant amounts of magnesium, iron, potassium, zinc, folic acid and fiber.

And we're only scratching the surface...greens are powerful antioxidants to help prevent cancer, cleanse and purify our systems and give us abundant energy. Recovering from a cold? Think greens. They help reduce mucus and clear up congestion. In need of some springtime cleansing? Greens will do the trick, helping to detoxify our liver and kidneys. In addition, greens have the added benefits of improving circulation, strengthening the immune system and promoting healthy intestinal flora.

### Choosing and Cooking with Greens

There are so many greens to choose from. Find greens that you love and eat them often. When you get bored with your favorites, be adventurous and try greens that you've never heard of before. **Broccoli** is very popular among adults and children. Each stem is like a tree trunk, giving you strong, grounded energy. Rotate between **bok choy, napa cabbage, kale, collards, watercress, mustard greens, broccoli rabe, dandelion** and other leafy greens. **Green cabbage** is great in the form of sauerkraut or raw. **Arugula, endive, chicory, lettuce, mesclun** and **wild greens** are generally eaten raw, but can be consumed in any creative way you enjoy. **Spinach, Swiss chard** and **beet greens** are best eaten in moderation because they are high in oxalic acid, which depletes calcium from bones and teeth, and may lead to osteoporosis. Cook these vegetables with something rich like tofu, seeds, nuts, beans, butter, animal products or oil. This will balance the effect of the oxalic acid.

With plenty of options to eat greens both raw and cooked, the possibilities are endless. Quite simply, going green is the way to go to energize and nourish ourselves and our families.