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What is Spinach Good For?

Dr. Mercola, August 6 2016

The Scoop on Spinach



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Botanical name: *Spinacia oleracea*

Obscurely referred to for years in England as "the Spanish vegetable," the name of this leafy green veggie was later shortened to the name we call it today. It's thought to have originated in ancient Persia. Spinach cultivation spread to Nepal, and by the seventh century, to China, where it's still called "Persian Greens." The Moors introduced it to Spain around the 11th century. According to the USDA, Americans consume nearly 2½ pounds of spinach per year per capita. This easily quadruples the amount eaten 40 years ago, possibly because the boiled-and-canned-to-resemble-seaweed dish once served in school lunches is much improved. Now greener, tastier and crisper by freezing, spinach fresh from the garden is often used for salads and in place of lettuce on sandwiches. No mere vegetable ever gained the fame that spinach did in the 1960s through the cartoon character **Popeye**. Often in vain, parents encouraged their children to eat their spinach so they would grow up to be big and strong. There's actually some truth to that...

Health Benefits of Spinach

Low in fat and even lower in cholesterol, spinach is high in niacin and zinc, as well as protein, fiber, vitamins A, C, E and K, thiamin, vitamin B6, folate, calcium, iron, magnesium, phosphorus, potassium, copper, and manganese. In other word, it's loaded

with good things for every part of your body! Abundant flavonoids in spinach act as antioxidants to keep cholesterol from oxidizing and protect your body from free radicals, particularly in the colon. The folate in spinach is good for your healthy cardiovascular system, and magnesium helps lower high blood pressure. Studies also have shown that spinach helps maintain your vigorous brain function, memory and mental clarity. In order to retain the rich iron content of spinach while cooking – lightly – add lemon juice or vinegar.

Studies Done on Spinach

Because of the potentially high incidence of DDT (Dichlorodiphenyltri-chloroethane) contamination, **only buy organic varieties of this vegetable**, as much as possible.

Spinach Healthy Recipes: Creamed Spinach



Ingredients:

¾ cup raw whole milk

¼ cup water

2 medium garlic cloves, minced

1 tablespoon butter

1½ tablespoons arrowroot

2 pounds spinach, steamed - or 2 pounds chard, steamed, drained

¼ cup grated Parmesan cheese

¼ teaspoon ground nutmeg

Sea salt and freshly ground pepper

Procedure:

In a medium saucepan, combine milk, water and garlic. Heat slowly until very hot and steamy. Let stand, covered, for five to 10 minutes. This allows the garlic to soften. Melt butter in another medium saucepan over medium high heat. Whisk in arrowroot, then add hot milk mixture, whisking until smooth. Stir in spinach or chard, and cook until sauce is thick and bubbly and the spinach is tender but still green, about six minutes. Stir in cheese and season with nutmeg, salt and pepper. Serve immediately.

This recipe makes four servings.

(From Healthy Recipes for Your Nutritional Type by Dr. Mercola)

Spinach Fun Facts

Known to thrive better in cooler than warmer climates, Arab farmers were nevertheless able to successfully cultivate spinach in the arid Mediterranean climate through the use of a sophisticated irrigation system, possibly as early as the eighth century.

Summary

Low in calories but packed with nutrients, spinach is one of a number of leafy vegetables becoming more and more prevalent on the salad bar. Its versatility makes it easily adaptable in healthy vegetable drinks and smoothies, lightly sautéed as a stand-alone side dish, and added to soups or stir fried vegetables. Best of all, this green superfood is packed with so many healthy attributes, it's hard to list them all!