

Winter Greens

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When winter doldrums hit the salad bowl, when lettuce sports sky-high prices, when romaine turns anemic, don't despair: There's a wealth of dark leafy greens to perk up your plate, your nutrient intake and your taste buds. To take advantage of the season's best, however, **you must be willing to try something new.** While even gourmets sometimes won't venture further than escarole or arugula when considering greens, there's plenty to choose from: Swiss chard, kale and collards thrive in winter, as do beet, turnip and mustard greens. Frost lends a sweetness to kale, unavailable in warmer climes. And even if some of the more exotic greens, such as tat soi, red mustard or mizuma, may not be common in your region, at least a few are available. Whatever your choice, you can rest assured it's a healthful one. All types of greens leave other veggies behind in the nutrition competition. Greens are extremely low in calories (a one cup serving packs a mere 25 calories), but they provide substantial amounts of vitamins A and C, essential immune system boosters and smaller quantities of calcium, iron, potassium, folic acid and fiber. They may even be protective against certain types of cancer.

The uninitiated may be reluctant to try these unfamiliar leaves, perhaps they've heard that greens are bitter (some are), or must be cooked for hours before they're truly edible. Young, tender greens are rarely bitter, although some are spicy. Dinosaur kale, red Russian kale, red mustard, sorrel or mizuma may all be eaten raw or cooked, depending upon taste preference and the age of the plant. Older or heartier greens may benefit from a two- to three-minute dunk in boiling water before being quick-cooked in a recipe.

Be careful not to overcook your greens. Those who have eaten greens boiled until lifeless might be reluctant to try again. Quick-cooking techniques on the other hand, preserve the texture, color and flavor of greens and will convert "greens haters." For those craving that long-cooked-with-a-ham-hock Southern taste, meat alternatives like veggie "bacon" or "ham" make excellent culinary companions.

Spinach, a winter mainstay, creates a dramatic backdrop in the salad bowl for all manner of toppings, as in the recipe for Orange and Onion Salad on Greens. Other

young greens, picked when less than 3 inches long, also work well in salads, but more mature leaves generally need to be cooked--just until done so their sometimes bitter undertones do not overpower other ingredients.

Tossing greens into soups, stews or pasta sauces for five to 10 minutes toward the end of cooking provides taste and color unequaled by other vegetables. For a cabbage flavor, use kale; beets, use beet greens or Swiss chard; for a lemon flavor, sorrel's a hit; for a spicy bite, try red mustard or arugula. The possibilities for using greens are endless. So, go for the greens!

Red Mustard Salad with Sesame Dressing

This dressing also tastes great on any other greens, raw or cooked.

6 cups washed mixed greens which include mizuma, tat soi, red mustard or other dark and spicy greens

1/4 cup orange juice

1 Tbs. Tamari

1 Tbs. rice vinegar

1 Tbs. Honey

2 tsp. sesame oil

2 Tbs. toasted sesame seeds

Place washed greens in large bowl or on individual plates.

Combine all liquid ingredients; whisk to blend. Pour dressing over salad just before serving; sprinkle with sesame seeds. Makes 4 servings.

PS: For main course you might add thinly sliced pickled ginger and pine nuts....yummy

Fresh Orange and Red Onion Salad on Mixed Greens

Either spinach or baby greens provide a dashing and tasty backdrop for the onions and oranges. This recipe may seem unusual but the flavors all complement one another. Besides, it's a great way to meet your five-a-day.

3 cups spinach or mixed baby greens, such as red mustard, arugula or dandelion OR add red mustard to your Laguna Farm salad mix

3 large navel oranges

1/2 medium red onion, thinly sliced into rings

Rice wine vinegar as needed

1 tsp. orange zest

2 Tbs. orange juice

2 Tbs. rice vinegar

2 tsp. olive oil

2 Tbs. minced chives or scallions

1/2 tsp. salt

Pinch cayenne

Freshly ground black pepper to taste

Wash Greens and dry them in spinner. Wrap loosely in damp towel and refrigerate until ready for use.

Cut off ends of oranges. Slice down sides of oranges, removing peel and underlying white pith. With orange flesh exposed, run the knife inside membrane on each side of orange section. Remove section; put in non-reactive bowl such as glass or stainless steel.

Toss onion with just enough vinegar to cover. Set aside to soak until onion loses some of its pink color and sharp flavor, about 20 minutes. Combine orange zest, orange juice, 2 tablespoons rice vinegar, oil, chives or scallions salt, cayenne and black pepper; whisk to blend.

Put greens in large bowl. Remove onion from vinegar. Toss oranges and onion with dressing. Arrange orange and onion over greens. Makes 6 servings.

Red Beet Risotto with Red Mustard Greens and Feta

Bon Appétit | February 2007

1/4 cup (1/2 stick) butter

2 (2 1/2- to 3-inch-diameter) beets, peeled, cut into 1/2-inch cubes

1 1/2 cups chopped white onion

1 cup arborio rice or medium-grain white rice

3 cups low-salt chicken broth or vegetable broth

1 tablespoon balsamic vinegar

1 1/2 cups chopped mustard greens

1 (5 1/2-ounce) package chilled soft fresh goat cheese, coarsely crumbled

Melt butter in heavy large saucepan over medium heat. Add beets and onion. Cover; cook until onion is soft, about 8 minutes. Mix in rice. Add broth and vinegar. Increase heat; bring to boil. Reduce heat to medium-low. Simmer uncovered until rice and beets are just tender and risotto is creamy, stirring occasionally, about 15 minutes. Season with salt and pepper. Spoon into shallow bowls. Sprinkle with greens and cheese.

Chard With Chickpeas And Feta

4 tablespoons olive oil
450 g chard, stems removed
4 spring onions, thinly sliced
2 tablespoons chopped fresh dill
2 garlic cloves, minced
450 g cooked chickpeas
Salt and pepper to taste
75 g feta cheese, crumbled
~Preheat the oven to 200°C, 400°F, gas mark 6. Coat a medium baking dish with 1 tablespoon of olive oil. Place the chard in a large saucepan, add 100 ml water, cover and cook over a high heat for about 5 minutes, until it is wilted. Drain and rinse under cold water, then squeeze it dry and chop. In a medium bowl, toss the chard with the remaining oil, onions, dill, garlic and chickpeas. Season to taste with salt and pepper. Spoon the mixture into the baking dish, sprinkle with feta and bake for 15 to 20 minutes, until it is sizzling hot. Serve immediately. Serves 4

Organic Carrot Soup With Ginger Essence

1 1/2 tablespoons olive oil
1 cup thinly sliced leeks (white part only)
1/2 large white onion, diced (about 1 cup)
2 1/2 pounds organic carrots, chopped
2 cups vegetable stock
1 tablespoon chopped fresh lemongrass (or 2 teaspoons dried, tied in a piece of cheesecloth)
3 1/2 teaspoons minced fresh ginger
1 cup fresh carrot juice

1/2 cup light sour cream, plus 4 tsp for garnish
Coarsely ground black pepper
1 tablespoon chopped chives
~Heat oil in a heavy-bottomed large stockpot on high heat until hot. Cook leeks and onion 2 to 3 minutes. Add carrots and 2 tbsp water. Cook, covered, 10 minutes, stirring occasionally. Add stock, lemongrass and 1 1/2 teaspoons ginger. Simmer about 30 minutes. Let mixture cool for 10 minutes, then pour into a food processor and purée. Add carrot juice and strain through a fine-mesh sieve. Discard pulp. (If not serving immediately, cool and refrigerate liquid.) Add sour cream and remaining 2 teaspoons ginger to strained liquid. Stir until completely incorporated. Heat 3 or 4 minutes over medium-low heat or serve cold. Season with pepper. Divide among 4 bowls. Garnish with chives and 1 tsp each sour cream.
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Beenleigh Blue and Leek Pie

Pastry:
(3oz) butter
(8oz) plain flour
1 tbsp olive oil
1 small egg
25g plain yoghurt
1/4 tsp bicarbonate of soda
pinch salt
egg & milk to brush lid

Filling:
(1 1/2 lbs) leeks
1 small onion
fresh ginger to taste
(2oz) butter
1/2 tsp caraway seeds
4 whole chestnuts
3 tsp wholegrain mustard
(4oz) Beenleigh Blue Cheese (or alternative mild blue cheese)
~Preheat the oven to 175C (360F, gas 4). To make the pastry, rub the marg and oil into the flour and add the bicarbonate of soda, egg, yoghurt and salt. Knead well

until shiny and springy. Wrap in clingfilm and leave in the fridge to rest for 30 minutes.
For the filling, chop the leeks on a slant. Peel and chop the onion, roughly chop the chestnuts.
Melt the butter in a saucepan and cook the leeks and onions until soft. Add the ginger, caraway, chestnuts and mustard. Season to taste. Cut the cheese into chunks. Remove the leek mix from heat and carefully stir in the cheese.
Roll out 2/3rds of the pastry to line the flan tin. Fill with the leek and cheese mixture and roll out the remaining pastry to form a lid.
Put the lid over and crimp well to seal. Glaze with egg and milk and cut a cross in the centre for steam to escape. Bake for 30-40 minutes. This pie can also be eaten cold. Serves: 4

Spicy Cauliflower

(1lb) potatoes
medium cauliflower
1 medium onion
2 cloves of garlic
4 tbsp oil
1/2 tsp ground turmeric
1 tsp ground cumin
1 tsp ground coriander
(1) piece root ginger
1 dried red chilli
1x 400g can of chopped tomatoes
Salt & pepper
~Wash the potatoes, chop into 3cm cubes and boil for 15 minutes until tender. Drain.
Slice the onion and saute in hot oil with the crushed garlic, finely chopped root ginger and chilli until the onion is transparent.
Break the cauliflower into small florets and add to the pan. Cook for a few minutes. Stir in the cumin, coriander and turmeric and stir and fry for 2 minutes
Add the chopped tomatoes and (5floz) of water. Bring to a simmer, cover and cook for 10 minutes. Add the potatoes and continue cooking for 5 minutes until the cauliflower is just tender. Serves: 4
This recipe from Green Cuisine by Anna Ross

Sweet Potato and Leek Tortilla

450g sweet potato
3 leeks, trimmed

60ml olive oil

4 eggs

125ml single cream or milk

125g mature cheddar cheese, grated

2tbsp chopped fresh parsley

salt and pepper

~Peel the sweet potato and cut into chunks. cook in boiling salted water until tender, Drain.

Slice leeks, heat oil in large frying pan, add leeks and cook until softened. Add potato & cook, stirring occasionally until potato begins to colour.

Meanwhile, beat eggs & cream together in bowl, season then pour into fry pan. Add cheese and mix carefully then cook gently until the tortilla is set on the bottom.

Now place the fry pan under a medium grill and cook until the tortilla is puffed up and golden. Serve straight from the pan sprinkled with parsley.