

Swiss Chard (Greens)

Interesting facts: “Swiss chard” It gets the name Swiss Chard (a.k.a. Green Chard) because of its extensive cultivation in Switzerland. The botanist who discovered and then named it hailed from Switzerland. However, its origin is farther south, in the Mediterranean region, specifically Sicily. Chard is in the Beet family, but its roots are inedible. In the spectrum of greens, Swiss chard lies between spinach and kale; not as tender as spinach, not as tough as kale. But like spinach, you can easily sauté it in some olive oil in just a few minutes.

How to select: Chard is typically classified by the color of its stems; red, white, green, or rainbow (a combination of colors, including yellow). Look for crisp, crinkly green leaves; the smaller the leaves, the sweeter their taste. Always buy organic and freshly picked within 1-2 days.

What to avoid: Avoid ones with spots or holes. Large leaves and stems are often chewy. Avoid older limp wet leaves as they can become toxic and develop fungus.

How to clean and store: Refrigerate chard, unwashed, in a plastic bag in the vegetable drawer. Chard will last two to three days.

How to prepare and cook: Steam or Boil, Sauté, Roasted

Steam or Boil: Cut the stalks and steam or boil for 5-10 minutes. Remove and place in a bowl; toss 1-2 tablespoons of olive oil and 1 teaspoon of balsamic vinegar and salt and pepper and serve.

Sauté: Chop the leaves into inch-wide strips. Keep the stalks and leaves separate. Sauté garlic and crushed red pepper flakes: Heat the olive oil in a sauté pan on medium high heat. Add garlic slices, crushed red pepper, and coriander seeds (if using), and cook for about 30 seconds, or until the garlic is fragrant.

Roasted: Preheat an oven to 350 °F. Grease a baking sheet with olive oil. Toss the 1 bunch cleaned and chopped chard stems and 1 chopped onion in a bowl with 1 tablespoon olive oil. Season with salt and pepper to taste, and spread onto the prepared baking sheet. Bake in the preheated oven until the chard stems have softened and the onion is starting to brown on the corners, about 15 minutes.

Recipe idea: Toss the roasted chard leaves with 2 tablespoons of olive oil, salt, and black pepper. Sprinkle the leaves over the stem mixture, then scatter 4 ounces of goat feta cheese over top. Return to the oven, and bake until the stems are tender, the leaves are beginning to crisp, and the feta is melted and golden, about 20 minutes. Serve.