

Kale (Greens)

Interesting facts: 1 cup of raw kale has just 33 calories yet contains 684% of vitamin K, 134% of vitamin C, 206% of Vitamin A plus iron, folate, omega-3s, magnesium, calcium, iron, fiber, and 2 grams of protein. BAM! That's nutrient density.

Kale has become so enormously popular that farming of it grew 57% between 2007 and 2012.

How to select: Look for: kale with dark bunches that have small to medium leaves. Always buy organic.

What to avoid: With the popularity of Kale it is now one of the most toxic due to pesticides so avoid conventional Kale. Also, avoid Kale with brown or yellow leaves.

How to clean and store: Wrap the unwashed kale in damp paper towels, then store in a plastic bag, in the refrigerator crisper for 5 days. Kale freezes well, but may become more bitter if you don't blanch it first. To blanch, separate stems and leaves, then place in boiling water, covering the pot, for a couple of minutes.

How to prepare and cook: Raw or juiced, Sautéed, Fried or Roasted, Soups and Stews

Raw or Juiced: May use leaves in juices and smoothies.

Sautéed: Heat olive oil in a large saucepan over medium-high heat. Add the garlic and cook until soft, but not colored. Raise heat to high, add the stock and kale and toss to combine. Cover and cook for 5 minutes.

Fried or Roasted: Roasted Kale Chips: Clean and pat dry 1 bunch of kale and tear into pieces. Toss with 1-2 tablespoons olive oil and sea salt. Roast in a 350 °F oven until light brown and crispy.

Recipe idea:

Lentil Kale Soup: In a soup pot over medium heat, 1 tablespoon olive oil with 1 cup chopped onion, 1/3 cup chopped celery and 1/3 cup chopped carrots, 2 bay leaves for 10 minutes. Add 2 tablespoons tomato paste, 1 teaspoon salt and 2 cloves of garlic minced and cook 1 more minute. Add 6 cups of water or vegetable broth and 1 cup dark green lentils and reduce heat to simmering, cover and cook 25 minutes. Add 6 cups chopped kale, 1/3 cup chopped parsley, 1 tablespoon balsamic vinegar, 2 teaspoons Dijon mustard and ¼ teaspoon black pepper and cook another 15 minutes. Ladle into soup bowls and serve. May top with parmesan cheese.