

Spinach

Spinach was domesticated in Central Asia , and brought to Europe by Arabs in the Middle Ages. It is available in curly and smooth leaf varieties. Spinach is good for our eyes, nervous system, helping to fight cardiovascular disorders, healthy skin and bones, and it is anti-cancerous.



TIPS:

Storage: See the guidelines for storing greens in this handbook.

General Cooking Info: If it's young eat it raw in salads. If it's more mature, spinach requires only the lightest of cooking methods. Quick sautés on a hot pan with a little chopped garlic olive oil and salt can be ready to eat in less than 5 minutes. Add it to a hot soup just before serving. Bake into quiches. The stems and crowns (the pink parts at the base of the stems) are also edible. Stems can be thrown in the pan a few seconds before the leaves. The crowns are great steamed, and have a beet-like sweetness to them. Spinach takes well to longer cooking if made into purees and sauces.

Growing info: Spinach is a much loved crop. It's also a very picky crop. Only the coolest of temperatures suits this plant, so it is next to impossible to grow it after June and before September. The fall planting of spinach that we plan for harvest in October and November, is always hit or miss. The temperature should be in the 50s for the seeds to even germinate!

Common Problems: Aside from fall germination delays, we get some leafminers (see Chard entry) in our spinach. In the spring we see some slug damage but, it is usually minimal. This year we're going to try growing Spinach through the winter in our new high tunnel!

Strawberry Spinach Salad

2 tablespoons sesame seeds
 1 tablespoon poppy seeds
 1/2 cup white sugar
 1/2 cup olive oil
 1/4 cup distilled white vinegar
 1/4 teaspoon paprika
 1/4 teaspoon Worcestershire sauce
 1 tablespoon minced onion
 10 ounces fresh spinach - rinsed, dried and torn into bite-size pieces
 1 quart strawberries - cleaned, hulled and sliced
 1/4 cup almonds, blanched and slivered

1. In a medium bowl, whisk together the sesame seeds, poppy seeds, sugar, olive oil, vinegar, paprika, Worcestershire sauce and onion. Cover, and chill for one hour.

2. In a large bowl, combine the spinach, strawberries and almonds. Pour dressing over salad, and toss. Refrigerate 10 to 15 minutes before serving.

Garlic Sautéed Spinach

1 1/2 pounds baby spinach leaves
 2 tablespoons good olive oil
 2 tablespoons chopped garlic (6 cloves)
 2 teaspoons kosher salt
 3/4 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper
 1 tablespoon unsalted butter
 Lemon

Sea or kosher salt, optional

Rinse the spinach well in cold water to make sure it's very clean. Spin it dry in a salad spinner, leaving just a little water clinging to the leaves.

In a very large pot or Dutch oven, heat the olive oil and saute the garlic over medium heat for about 1 minute, but not until it's browned. Add all the spinach, the salt, and pepper to the pot, toss it with the garlic and oil, cover the pot, and cook it for 2 minutes. Uncover the pot, turn the heat on high, and cook the spinach for another minute, stirring with a wooden spoon, until all the spinach is wilted. Using a slotted spoon, lift the spinach to a serving bowl and top with the butter, a squeeze of lemon, and a sprinkling of sea or kosher salt. Serve hot.

Barefoot Contessa

Creamed Spinach

2 lb of fresh spinach.
 1 1/2 cups of hot milk.
 1 cup of cheddar cheese, grated.
 2 tablespoons of butter.
 2 tablespoons of flour.
 1 teaspoon of salt.
 Pinch of pepper.
 Pinch of nutmeg

Trim and wash 2 lb of fresh spinach.

Place in a suitably-sized pot with water still on the leaves. Cover; then cook only until wilted. Allow to cool, then squeeze out the excess water. In a saucepan, melt the butter; then add the flour. Whisk and gently cook for 3-4 minutes. Add the milk; then bring to a boil. Add the salt and a pinch of pepper and nutmeg. Cook for about 5-6 minutes. Combine the sauce with the spinach and 1/2 cup of grated cheese. Spoon into a baking dish, then top with the other 1/2 cup of grated cheddar.

Bake at 375°F (190°C) for 20 minutes.