



COMMUNITY NEWSLETTER

COOKING GREENS



Cooking greens are sturdy leafy greens like beet, chard, collard, kale, mustard, and turnip greens. They are part of the Amaranthaceae or Brassicaceae families. Cooking greens are from the Eastern Mediterranean region near Greece and date to prehistoric times. They came to the Americas through the trans-Atlantic slave trade from West Africa and became an integral part of plantation gardens in the southern colonies. Cooking greens can taste sweet, earthy, mellow, mild, nutty, peppery, smokey, spicy, or bitter. Cooking greens can be eaten raw, juiced, and cooked. They can be blanched, braised, roasted, sautéed, steamed, stewed, stir-fried, or fermented. In Michigan, cooking greens grown outside are harvested from summer through fall.



COOKING GREENS ARE

Depending on the type, cooking greens are:

- An excellent source of antioxidant vitamin A and a good source of antioxidants vitamins C* and E. In combination with minerals and fiber found in nutrient rich fruits, vegetables, and grains, antioxidants can help prevent a variety of chronic diseases.
- An excellent source of vitamin K. Vitamin K is vital for blood clotting and healthy bones.
- A good source of fiber. Fiber helps us feel fuller and benefits the digestive and cardiovascular systems.
- A source of calcium*. Calcium helps build strong bones and teeth.
- A source of iron*. Iron is important for healthy blood and cells.

**Foods that are high in vitamin C, calcium, and/or iron can help protect you from lead absorption.*

MICHIGAN MADE

Since 2007, the production of greens in Michigan, most notably kale, has grown significantly due to consumer demand. In addition to seasonal growing, Michigan growers have extended their operations by planting in hoop houses, green houses, and high tunnels. This makes fresh cooking greens available year-round. Michigan grown cooking greens can be found statewide in grocery stores, corner stores, farmers markets, farm stands, CSA farms, U-Pick farms, food co-ops, and community gardens.



FUN FACTS

- Cooking greens taste sweeter when harvested after a frost.
- Collard greens are also known as tree cabbage.
- Collard, mustard, and turnip greens are commonly known as "Southern greens."
- Dinosaur or Tuscan kale has bumpy, dark blue-green leaves and an earthy, sweet flavor.
- Swiss chard can have stalks in white, red, pink, orange, gold, and green, and all taste slightly different.
- Rainbow chard isn't a variety, but a packaged mix of white, gold, and red Swiss chard.
- As greens are cooking, they reduce in size by half or more.
- California produces the most kale in the United States.
- China produces the most kale worldwide.
- Growing, cooking, and eating greens is a beloved African American and Southern tradition that spans centuries.

BUYING AND STORING

- Select leafy greens with full, fresh leaves and thick stems. Avoid brown, yellow, wilted, soft, or spotted leaves.
- Store whole greens in a plastic bag in the refrigerator up to five days. Store chopped greens in their original packaging
- To freeze greens, wash, blanch, label, date, and freeze in airtight containers for up to one year.
- Wash all fruits and vegetables before using. Fill a large bowl with water, add greens, and rub leaves to remove dirt. Drain and repeat until the water is clear.

MORE THAN FRESH

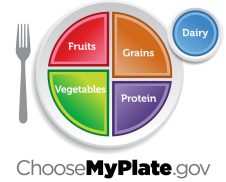
In addition to fresh, greens are available canned and frozen. When buying packaged greens, be sure to read labels and choose items that are reduced or low-sodium (salt), or no salt added and low in saturated fat, with no added sugar.



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EAT WITH MYPLATE

MyPlate focuses on whole grains, lean protein, low-fat dairy, and half the plate being fruits and vegetables. Cooking greens are part of the Vegetable Group. Most people need 2–3 cups of vegetables per day. For more information visit: myplate.gov.



IT ALL COUNTS

Fresh, frozen, canned, dried, and 100% vegetable and fruit juices count toward your daily MyPlate goals.

LEMON KALE PESTO

Time: 25 minutes | Makes: 10 servings | Serving Size: 2 tablespoons

Nutrition Information Per Serving: Calories 114, Carbohydrate 3g, Dietary Fiber 1g, Protein 2g, Total Fat 11g, Saturated Fat 1g, Cholesterol 0mg, Sodium 188mg

INGREDIENTS

- | | |
|--|--|
| ¾ teaspoon kosher salt | ¾ cup walnuts or pecans, toasted* |
| ¼ teaspoon pepper | 3 cups packed fresh kale (about 1 small bunch) |
| 2 tablespoons fresh lemon juice, about 1 lemon | ¼ cup olive oil |
| 2–3 garlic cloves, chopped | |

Tips: Greens require thorough cleaning before using. Fill a large bowl with water, add greens, and rub leaves to remove dirt. Drain and repeat until the water is clear. To remove stems, fold leaves in half and pull stem away from leaves.

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Add salt, pepper, garlic, lemon juice, and walnuts or pecans to a blender or food processor, pulse until finely chopped and well combined.
2. Add kale in batches. Drizzle oil into the mixture while blending and puree until pesto reaches desired consistency, stopping to scrape down the sides as necessary. If pesto is too thick, add more water or olive oil to thin.
3. Serve over cooked whole grain pasta, spread on toasted whole-wheat bread or crackers, add to scrambled eggs and omelets, or mix with low-fat yogurt and serve as a dip with fresh vegetables.

*HOW TO TOAST NUTS

In the Oven

1. Preheat oven to 350 F.
2. Arrange walnuts or pecans in a single layer on a parchment lined baking sheet.
3. When oven is hot, bake 8 to 10 minutes, turning nuts halfway, until nuts are golden brown.
4. Remove from oven and let cool.
5. Store in an airtight container until ready to use. Walnuts will keep best in the refrigerator.

On the Stovetop

1. Heat a frying pan over medium to medium-high heat, add walnuts or pecans, do not crowd.
2. Toast about 6 minutes, stirring and flipping every 30 seconds to ensure they do not overcook or burn, until nuts are golden brown.
3. Remove pan from heat and transfer nuts to a plate to cool.
4. Store in an airtight container until ready to use. Walnuts will keep best in the refrigerator.

Always wash hands before preparing food. Wash all fresh fruits and vegetables before using.



CHANGE IT UP

- Swap basil, parsley, garlic scapes, or chives for kale.
- For a Mexican inspired pesto, swap kale for cilantro and the nuts for pepitas.

TRY THIS

- Add leftover cooked greens to quesadillas, pastas, or egg dishes.
- Sauté Swiss chard and kale with olive oil and garlic and serve with a squeeze of fresh lemon for a great side dish.
- It's a wrap. Try blanched or steamed collard, mustard, chard, or kale leaves as an alternative to flatbreads or tortillas.