



Lettuce



Leaf Lettuce • Head Lettuce • Stem Lettuce

Fun Facts: Lettuce is 95% water. Iceberg lettuce is the second most-frequently vegetable eaten in the U.S., while leaf lettuce is among the top 13 vegetables eaten. Americans eat almost five times more lettuce now than they ate in the early 1900s.

Selecting Fresh Lettuce: Look for crisphead-type lettuces, such as iceberg, and cos, or romaine, lettuce that have crisp leaves. Romaine lettuce forms a long medium-dense head. Leaf (or loose-leaf) lettuce should have crisp leaves loosely arranged on the stalk. Look for butterhead lettuce, such as Boston or Bibb, that has a small loose head with tender, soft leaves (the inner leaves have an oily or buttery feel). Avoid lettuce that is dry or wilted, or that has soft decay spots or looks rusty or discolored.

Measuring Fresh Lettuce:

1 head = about 2 pounds = about 20 to 24 ounces ready to eat = about 10 or 12 cups

1 cup shredded or chopped = about 2 ounces by weight = 55 grams

Handling and Preserving: Refrigerate unwashed dry lettuce for up to 2 weeks in a perforated plastic bag in the coolest part of the refrigerator, which is the top shelf against the rear wall, or in the vegetable drawer. Avoid storing lettuce near apples, pears or bananas since they release a natural ripening gas, ethylene, which causes lettuce to develop brown spots and decay quickly. Leaf and head lettuce do not freeze well.

Preparation and Serving: Wash lettuce leaves under cool running water and drain. Pat dry with a clean towel or dry with a salad spinner. Restore limp leaves by soaking them in ice water for a few minutes. Tear leaves into pieces. For best nutrition and appearance, do not cut or slice lettuce in advance. Use all types of lettuce as a salad, on sandwiches, as a garnish, or as directed in recipes. Iceberg, leaf and romaine lettuce provide flavor and crunch. Butterhead lettuce has a delicate sweet flavor. Peel the uncommon stem-type or asparagus lettuce and use raw, like celery, or cooked.

Nutrition Facts One serving = 1 cup raw lettuce. 1 cup chopped lettuce has: Calories 7-10; Protein 1 gram; Carbohydrates 1 to 2 grams; Fat 0 grams. Nutritional value varies, with darker-colored leaves contributing more nutrients. Iceberg lettuce has very low levels of all nutrients. Romaine, leaf and butterhead lettuce contribute vitamins C and K, carotenoids (which the body converts to vitamin A), the B vitamin folic acid, essential minerals such as chromium, and other nutrients, antioxidants and phytochemicals.

References: www.urbanext.uiuc.edu/veggies; www.fda.gov/fdac/special/foodlabel/raw.html; www.aboutproduce.com; www.ianr.unl.edu/pubs/horticulture/g71.htm; ESHA Food Processor; Food for Fifty, 11th edition, 2001, by M. Molt, Prentice Hall

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