



Spinach

Fun Facts: A recipe with the word “florentine” means it contains spinach. The expression honors the French queen, Catherine de Medici, who loved spinach and was from Florence, Italy. New Zealand spinach is a leafy green vegetable, but it is not really spinach. It can, however, be used in similar ways. Spinach is extremely high in healthful antioxidants. Eating spinach helps protect health against many diseases, including heart disease, cancer and age-related macular degeneration. Spinach is closely related to beets and Swiss chard. On average, Americans eat about 2 1/2 pounds of spinach per year.

Selecting Fresh Spinach: Look for fresh, crisp dark green leaves and tender stems. Smooth leaf varieties are easier to clean. Avoid spinach with wilted, yellow, discolored, damaged or slimy leaves, or with long or tough stems.

Measuring Fresh Spinach:

1 pound raw = about 14 ounces ready to eat = about 13 cups chopped, raw
= about 2 cups cooked

1/2 cup cooked = about 3 1/2 ounces by weight = 95 grams



Handling and Preserving: Refrigerate in a perforated plastic bag in the vegetable drawer. Spinach may stay fresh up to 14 days, but when possible use during the first few days. **To freeze**, select tender fresh leaves. Rinse off dirt. Remove stems if tough. Place a handful of spinach in boiling water for 1 1/2 minutes. Drain immediately and place in ice water for 1 1/2 minutes. Drain again. Pack into freezer bags, leaving 3 inches of air space. Squeeze out the air, seal, date and freeze.

Preparation and Serving: Rinse dirt from spinach leaves and dry with clean paper towels or in a salad spinner. Serve raw or cooked spinach plain, or use as directed in recipes. Spinach may be used in cold and hot salads, casseroles including egg dishes, soups, dips, etc. To cook spinach: steam, microwave, boil or stir-fry until tender. For the best taste, color, texture and nutrition, do not overcook.

Nutrition Facts 1 serving = 1 cup raw or 1/2 cup cooked spinach. Each 1/2 cup steamed spinach has: Calories 21; Protein 3 grams; Carbohydrates 3 grams; Fat 0 grams. For 1 cup raw spinach: Calories 7; Protein 1 gram; Carbohydrates 1 gram; Fat 0 grams. Spinach contributes fiber, carotenoids (which the body converts to vitamin A), vitamins C and K, B vitamins including folic acid, iron, and many other nutrients to the diet.

References: ESHA Food Processor; Food for Fifty, 11th edition, 2001, by M. Molt, Prentice Hall; www.aboutproduce.com; www.oznet.ksu.edu/library/FNTR2/C648.PDF; http://agecoext.tamu.edu/publications/ag_news/2002/jan/01-30-02.pdf; www.ces.ncsu.edu/depts/hort/hil/hil-8017.html

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