

Dark green leafy vegetables include spinach, beet greens, Swiss chard, chicory, endive, escarole, dandelion, cress, sorrel, and others. One cup raw spinach provides approximately:

- 180% daily value (DV) of vitamin K.
- 55% DV of vitamin A.
- 15% DV of vitamin C.
- 15% DV of folate.

These greens also contain a variety of minerals, like iron, calcium, magnesium and potassium, and the phytonutrient pigments carotenoids and chlorophyll.

HOW THEY IMPROVE HEALTH

- Vitamin K is important for bone health and may play a role in preventing osteoporosis and inflammatory diseases.
- Carotenoids and vitamin A help preserve overall eye health.
- The antioxidants in green leafy vegetables have been suggested to lower the risk of stomach, breast and skin cancers, and cardiovascular disease.

Farm to Health Series

MAXIMIZE YOUR NUTRIENTS FROM:

DARK GREEN LEAFY VEGETABLES



Photo reprinted from www.aicr.org

NUTRIENT AND PHYTONUTRIENT CHANGES

- Leafy green vegetables have a relatively short shelf life and should be refrigerated. Only chop the greens when ready to use.
- Light cooking (short time, low heat) helps to make the minerals and vitamins A and K more digestible. However, it does cause a decrease in vitamin C.
- When preserving greens, freezing is your best option. Some vitamin C will be lost, but vitamins A and K and the minerals are maintained as long as the drained liquid is also consumed.

This information is not meant to diagnose, treat, cure, or prevent any disease. This project is made possible by funding through OSU CARES - an initiative of OSU Extension and the OSU to expand faculty, staff and student partnerships with communities throughout Ohio.

Recipe: Elegant Cheesy Spinach Cakes

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This recipe uses cooked spinach to increase carotenoid, vitamin K and mineral absorption (the fat in the cheese also helps with this).

Ingredients:

- 12 oz. fresh baby spinach
- 1/2 cup part-skim or low fat ricotta cheese
- 1/4 cup shredded Romano or Parmesan cheese
- 3 large eggs (can substitute 2 large eggs, plus 2 egg whites, beaten)
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- Freshly ground pepper to taste
- Canola oil cooking spray

Directions:

- Preheat oven to 400 degrees F.
- Use food processor and pulse spinach until it is finely chopped, but don't overdo it. Place spinach in bowl. Add cheeses, eggs, garlic and pepper. Stir to combine well.
- Coat 8 "cups" of a muffin pan (1/2 cup size) with cooking spray. Spoon in spinach mixture. Bake 20-22 minutes. Remove pan from oven and let stand 6-7 minutes to allow to firm up. Loosen sides with knife and gently lift out.
- Sprinkle a bit of additional Romano or Parmesan on top (optional) and serve warm.

Makes 8 spinach cakes: 8 appetizers or 4 side dish servings
Per serving (appetizer size): 65 calories, 3.3 g total fat (2 g saturated fat), 3 g carbohydrate, 25 g protein, 0.9 g dietary fiber, 157 mg sodium, 4026 IU vitamin A (81% DV), 200 µg vitamin K (254% DV), 85 µg folate (21% DV), 160 mg calcium (16% DV), 1.3mg iron (7% DV)



OTHER FOOD SOURCES OF KEY NUTRIENTS AND PHYTONUTRIENTS:

Vitamin K

Cruciferous Vegetables
Asparagus

Vitamin A

Winter squash
Carrots

For more information or how to maximize nutrients in other fruits and vegetables, see <http://localfoods.osu.edu/maximizenuutrients>.

