



SPINACH



Spinach is a cold weather crop that can be eaten cooked or raw. It is an excellent source of vitamin A, vitamin K, and folate. It is also a good source of calcium, iron, potassium, vitamin C and vitamin B6. Vitamin K helps stop cuts and scrapes from bleeding too much and helps the healing process. Vitamin K works with calcium to build strong bones. One cup of fresh spinach will make $\frac{1}{4}$ cup of cooked spinach.

One cup of fresh spinach has only 6 calories. Spinach is available year round as fresh (loose or bagged), canned or frozen. Annual consumption of spinach has jumped 66% from 1992 to 2002. This is mostly due to the availability of pre-cut, bagged spinach. When Popeye made his debut on January 17, 1929, spinach became the third most popular children's food after turkey and ice cream. Today, more than 94% of Americans associate spinach with Popeye. Spinach was the first frozen vegetable to be sold for commercial use.

Choose fresh spinach leaves that are green and crisp. Avoid leaves that are limp, spotted, or damaged. It can be stored in an open plastic bag in the refrigerator for up to four days. Spinach leaves should be rinsed in cool water and patted dry just before using. If using canned or frozen spinach, look for low-sodium varieties.

Add chopped, frozen spinach to lasagna, casseroles or soup. Saute spinach with eggs and top with chopped tomatoes for breakfast. Use fresh spinach on sandwiches instead of lettuce.

Spinach Raisin Salad: (makes 24 servings at $\frac{1}{4}$ cup each)

6 ounces raw spinach, washed and drained – $\frac{1}{2}$ cup raisins* – $\frac{1}{4}$ cup light balsamic vinaigrette – small paper trays or plates

Combine spinach, raisins and vinaigrette in a bowl. Mix well. – Place $\frac{1}{4}$ cup of salad on paper tray. Serve immediately or chilled

*may substitute with other dried fruits

Information from: <http://www.harvestofthemonth.cdph.ca.gov/download.asp>

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