

Leafy Green Basics

BUYING AND STORING GREENS

- When selecting greens for cooking, remember they cook down considerably, by one-quarter or more, from their original volume.
- Wrap fresh greens in damp paper toweling, then place in a perforated plastic bag and refrigerate.
- If the greens are purchased in good condition and if the paper toweling is kept moist, most varieties will keep one week.
- For long-term storage, freezing greens gives a better product than canning greens.

WASHING GREENS

- Wash greens thoroughly. Place them in a sink filled with lukewarm water and swish around. (Tepid water helps to remove the grit faster than cool water.) Remove any roots, stem the greens if necessary and repeat the washing process until the grit disappears.
- For salad greens, whirl in a salad spinner or pat dry in paper toweling.

COOKING GREENS

Never cook greens in aluminum cookware, because it will affect both appearance and taste.

FREEZING GREENS

Select young, tender green leaves. Wash thoroughly and cut off woody stems. Blanch collards in boiling water for 3 minutes and all other greens 2 minutes (in 2 gallons water per pound of greens). Cool, drain and package, leaving ½-inch headspace.

PREPARING COLLARDS

Wide-leafed greens with a cabbage flavor, are traditionally cooked for several hours to yield very tender eating. They can also be simmered in a seasoned broth for 20 to 30 minutes. Season collards with garlic, onion, chili peppers, ginger or curry.

PREPARING MUSTARD GREENS

These oval-shaped leaves with frilled or scalloped edges have a sharp, nippy taste. Young, tender leaves can be added to salads, providing a radishy “bite” along with an attractive appearance. Mustard greens benefit from slow cooking, which creates a mellow flavor; or you may want to blanch them and add them to soups, creamy purées or sautés.

PREPARING SPINACH

- To prepare spinach for eating raw or cooked, first wash the leaves well. To remove the stem, fold each leaf lengthwise across the stem with its underside facing you and pull the stem down to the leaf tip.
- Add raw spinach to salads with sliced mushrooms, crumbled egg and crisp bacon dressed with mustard vinaigrette.
- Spinach can be cooked in just the water that clings to its leaves after rinsing. Cover and cook only a few minutes until wilted. Do not overcook. Garnish buttered, cooked spinach with freshly grated cheese, toasted almonds or deviled eggs.

For more information on leafy greens, contact your local Extension office, or the Home and Garden Information Center at 1-888-656-9988.

SOURCE:

1. United Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Association. *The Fresh Approach to Leafy Greens*.
2. Reynolds, Susan and Paulette Williams. *So Easy to Preserve*. Bulletin 989. Revised 1999 by Elizabeth Andress and Judy Harrison. Cooperative Extension Service, Univ. of Georgia.

This information has been reviewed and adapted for use in South Carolina by P.H. Schmutz, HGIC Information Specialist; J.E. Campbell, graduate student; and E.H. Hoyle, Extension Food Safety Specialist, Clemson University.

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