



Hearty Greens

"Greens" is a broad term for plant leaves eaten as vegetables such as collards, kale, Swiss chard, spinach and beet greens. Although available in markets year-round, they are at their prime in spring and fall. The taste and texture depend on the type of green. Some may taste better eaten raw--like spinach and lettuce which are sweeter and more tender. Kale and Swiss Chard are tougher so taste better when cooked. Massaging kale with your hands helps to soften it so it can be eaten raw in a salad. Spinach seed is a major crop in Skagit, and kale thrives in the cool soils of Skagit in spring and fall.

Nutrition

Greens are referred to as super foods - low in calories and fat while loaded with vitamin A, vitamin C, vitamin K, antioxidants, fiber, folate, magnesium, calcium, iron and potassium.

Selection

Look for nice green leaves with no blemishes or dark spots, no areas turning yellow or brown and that are not wilted. If they aren't wilted, then you know they're fresh. Before processing, rinse greens/leaves under running water to clean off dirt.

Storage

Place kale, swiss chard or collard greens in a moisture-proof bag and refrigerate so they should keep well for up to five days. For spinach and other delicate greens, remove bands and ties. Store in the refrigerator in a sealed container lined with a damp towel.

Measurements



Kale, Collards, Swiss Chard



Raw Volume



Weight

Freezing

- Select young, tender green leaves. Wash thoroughly and cut off woody stems.
- Water blanch the collard greens for 3 minutes and all other greens for 2 minutes.
- Cool immediately by immersing in ice water for an equivalent amount of time. To avoid over- or undercooking during blanching, allow 1 gallon of water per pound of greens when blanching in boiling water.
- Drain and pack in moisture-vapor proof freezer containers or freezer weight plastic bags, squeezing out as much air as possible. Seal, label and freeze.



Tip: Keep frozen food at 0 degrees or lower for best quality



Drying

Preparation: Trim and wash very thoroughly. Shake or pat dry to remove excess moisture

Pretreatment: Steam blanch 2-1/2 minutes; water blanch 1 1/2 minutes, cool immediately by immersing in ice water for an equivalent amount of time. Drain.

Drying Procedure:

- Place leaves in a single layer on drying trays.
- Dry at 140°F, approximately 8-10 hours, until brittle and crisp.
- Package dried greens in moisture/vapor proof containers. Label. Store in a cool, dark, dry place.



Canning



Spinach and other greens are low-acid foods. Pressure canning is necessary when canning spinach and greens to prevent the growth of botulinum bacteria.

Refer to National Center for Home Food Preservation for Pressure Canning instructions https://nchfp.uga.edu/how/can_04/spinach_greens.html

Preserve Skagit Crop Sheets describe three food preservation techniques—freezing, drying, and water bath canning—consistent with USDA Food Preservation and Food Safety recommendations. Pressure canning for low acid foods such as meats and vegetables is not included. Additional resources and recipes, as well as information on Pressure Canning, can be found on the WSU Skagit Food Preservation Website <https://extension.wsu.edu/skagit/fam/food-preservation/> or the National Center for Home Food Preservation <https://nchfp.uga.edu/index.html>.

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