



Produce of the
Month

Spinach

Welcome! This month we shine the spotlight on Popeye's favorite vegetable of all...spinach! This leafy green vegetable was first cultivated about 2,000 years ago in Iran where it was called aspanakh (or ispanai), which translates roughly to "green hand", and was considered "the prince of vegetables." Clearly Middle-Easterners knew very early on just how nutritious spinach truly is!

Spinach made its way into China during the 7th century A.D. and then eventually to Spain around A.D. 1100. A prickly seeded form was known in Germany during the 1200s, but today's commercial smooth seeded variety was not described there until 1552. By 1806, spinach was featured in American

seed catalogs, but it wasn't until the 1920s that spinach was pushed commercially in the United States.

Today, spinach is grown in a number of states, including Arizona, Texas, Colorado, Florida, Maryland, and New Jersey. But it is California that produces more than 50% of the U.S. spinach crop, the state that also leads in the spinach processing industry, producing about 1/3 of the U.S.'s total processed spinach output. The remainder is processed in Arkansas and Oklahoma. As you can see, producing and delivering spinach in the U.S. is quite the multi-state effort!

Sources: University of Georgia College of Agriculture & Environmental Sciences, California Farm Bureau Federation, Western Growers Association, Food Reference Website, GrowingTaste.com

What Variety is Your Favorite?

There are a number of spinach varieties readily available, and they all have unique characteristics. Which one is your favorite?

- **Flat or Smooth Leaf:** Includes Denali, Hector, and Space types. Leaves are unwrinkled and spade-shaped. Mild in flavor, flat or smooth leafed spinach is typically used for canning, freezing, soups, baby food, and processed foods. However, Hector spinach is particularly good for salads.
- **Savoy:** Includes Tyee, Vienna, and Savoy Hybrid types. Leaves are crinkly and dark green, with a different texture than flat or smooth leaf but a similar taste. Savoy Hybrid spinach is noted for being a good autumn crop for shipping and freezing. Savoy spinach is usually sold fresh.
- **Semi-Savoy:** Includes Melody, Coho, and Indian Summer types. Leaves are slightly curved with a texture similar to the Savoy variety. Semi-Savoy tends to be easier to clean than Savoy, however. Indian Summer spinach is noted as a particularly good performer in greenhouses. Semi-Savoy spinach is typically available fresh but can also be found in some processed foods.

Sources: University of Georgia College of Agriculture & Environmental Sciences, Food Reference Website

Did You Know?

- Ninety-one percent of a spinach leaf is water!
- There are about 1,400 species of spinach known to exist.
- One acre of a spinach crop requires between 10-15 pounds of seed. This equals 400,000-600,000 seeds!
- According to the USDA, Americans consume, on average, about 3 pounds of spinach per year.
- Baby spinach is the most popular variety among American consumers.
- Typically, spinach is used in salads or as a side dish. However, it can be used in soups, entrees, and more!
- Market researchers indicate that spinach purchases increase among the more highly educated and in areas with dense populations!
- In 2005, it was approximated that 63% of households earning more than \$85,000 per year purchased spinach.
- Spinach does not have a very long shelf life. If dried and packed loosely in cellophane or plastic baggy and stored in a refrigerator crisper, fresh spinach will last only 3-4 days. So don't let your spinach sit around!
- Spinach plants have greenish-white flowers found in clusters on a spike!
- Ninety percent of fresh spinach in the U.S. comes from California, Arizona, and Texas!

Sources: University of Georgia College of Agriculture & Environmental Sciences, California Farm Bureau Federation, Western Growers Association, Food Reference Website



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For Your Health! The Sailor Man Is Right!

You can't always discount cartoons when it comes to offering factual information. While spinach may not provide an instantaneous transformation into a muscle-laden figure like Popeye, there is no doubt that spinach packs a bona fide nutritional wallop! Consider the fact that one single leaf of spinach contains 19% of your daily recommended allowance of Vitamin A. One leaf! Up the serving to one cup, and things start getting seriously nutritious. How do these daily recommended allowance figures sound: 56% of Vitamin A, 14% of Vitamin C, 5% of iron, and 3% of calcium. You get all this for the low, low cost of 7 calories and 24mg of sodium! Not bad...not bad at all.

Nutrition Facts	
Serving Size 1 cup 30g (30 g)	
Amount Per Serving	
Calories 7	Calories from Fat 1
% Daily Value*	
Total Fat 0g	0%
Saturated Fat 0g	0%
Trans Fat	
Cholesterol 0mg	0%
Sodium 24mg	1%
Total Carbohydrate 1g	0%
Dietary Fiber 1g	3%
Sugars 0g	
Protein 1g	
Vitamin A 56% • Vitamin C 14%	
Calcium 3% • Iron 5%	

*Percent Daily Values are based on a 2,000 calorie diet. Your daily values may be higher or lower depending on your calorie needs.

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But the nutrition power punch from spinach doesn't end there. Spinach also provides niacin; zinc; dietary fiber; protein; Vitamins B6, E, & K; and a plethora of other important nutrients. There is no doubt about it...when Middle-Easterners dubbed spinach "the prince of vegetables" so very long ago, they weren't kidding!

Sources: University of Georgia College of Agriculture & Environmental Sciences, Food Reference Website, NutritionData.com

Spot the Falsity

In each of the statements below, one fact is actually false. Circle which "fact" is incorrect. Jot down what the statement should say.

- Spinach is high in Vitamin A, calcium, and calories.
- Spinach is believed to have originated in Iran about 1,000 years ago.
- The average American eats 3 bushels of spinach every year.
- Ninety percent of spinach produced in the U.S. comes from California, New Mexico, and Texas.
- Spinach comes in Flat or Smooth Leaf; Savoy; and Semi-Savory varieties.
- Spinach was first available commercially in the U.S. by the 1820s.
- Ten pounds of spinach seed equals about 40,000 seeds total.
- Ninety-one percent of a spinach leaf is comprised of chlorophyll.
- Spinach plants produce grayish-white flowers on spikes.
- Fresh spinach is Popeye's favorite vegetable.



Note: Wrong answers are in RED Correct answers are in GREEN
 Answers:
 1-calories/low in calories;
 2-1,000/2,000;
 3-bushels/pounds;
 4-New Mexico/Arizona;
 5-semi-savory/semi-savory;
 6-1820s/1920s;
 7-40,000/400,000;
 8-chlorophyll/water;
 9-grayish/greenish;
 10-fresh/canned

A Tasty Treat To Try At Home



Spinach Dip

- 1 cup nonfat mayonnaise
- 1 - 16 ounce container fat free cream cheese
- 1 package dry vegetable soup mix
- 1 - 4 ounce can diced water chestnuts
- 1 -10 ounce package of frozen chopped spinach, thawed and drained

In a medium bowl mix together all ingredients. Chill in the refrigerator for 6 hours, or overnight. Serve with whole grain crackers, breadsticks, and raw vegetables.

Serves: 4 people
 TIP: For added protein and an almost complete meal, add some mashed tofu. Tofu has no flavor and will blend into the dip nicely without anyone even knowing!

Nutrition Facts for 1 serving:
 180 calories
 0 g fat
 1180 mg sodium
 4 g fiber

Note: for a lower sodium version you may look in your grocery store for a low sodium dry vegetable soup mix

Quotable Notables

"He's Popeye the Sailor Man. He's Popeye the Sailor Man. He's strong to the finch cause he eats his spinach, he's Popeye the sailor man." - "Popeye the Sailor Man" (song)

"Never eat spinach just before going on the air." - Dan Rather

"I am indifferent if my spinach is leaf or creamed; if I work to fatiguing point or spend days doing nothing..." - Conrad Veidt, Actor