



A Garden-Based Learning Program for Preschoolers

SPINACH



Spinach is a part of the **dark leafy green** family. MyPyramid and the Dietary Guidelines suggest that we include dark leafy greens like spinach in our diets. Spinach provides vitamin A, which helps keep skin and eyes healthy and helps protect against infections. Spinach also provides vitamin C, which helps heal wounds and keeps gums healthy. And spinach also contains folic acid, which helps the body form red blood cells and helps women of child-bearing age reduce the risk of neural tube defects, such as spina bifida during fetal development.

Spinach can be eaten raw or cooked. MyPyramid suggests that adults eat 2½ cups of vegetables a day. Children ages 3 to 5 should eat 1½ cups of vegetables a day. Spinach is a complement ingredient to many different foods. Spinach can be a part of salads, sandwiches, casseroles, and wraps. Spinach is located in grocery stores all year and can be found fresh, frozen, or canned.

MEALTIME IDEAS

Spinach Lasagna (8 servings)

- 16 ounces low-fat ricotta or cottage cheese
- 16 ounces frozen chopped spinach, thawed and drained
- 24-ounce jar pasta sauce
- 1 package lasagna noodles
- 16 ounces partially-skim Mozzarella, shredded
- 1 teaspoon dry minced garlic
- 1 teaspoon dry minced onion

Directions

Preheat oven to 350 °F. Thaw spinach under warm water and press out water thoroughly. In mixing bowl, combine ricotta or cottage cheese, half of the shredded mozzarella, garlic, onion and spinach. Spread a small amount of sauce on the bottom of a 13 x 9 pan. Put a layer of dry (uncooked) lasagna noodles, then a layer of half of the cheese mixture. Add another layer of sauce, noodles, and mixture. End with a layer of noodles, a layer of sauce; and the remaining shredded cheese. Cover with aluminum foil and bake 1 hour, removing foil for the last 5 to 10 minutes.

Calories 200; Total fat 7g; Saturated fat 3g; Cholesterol 20mg; Sodium 700mg; Total Carbohydrates 24g; Dietary fiber 11g; Sugar 13g; Protein 12g

Pasta Salad Florentine (4 servings)

- 6 ounces small, tube-shaped pasta
- 2 cups torn fresh spinach
- 2 cups halved cherry tomatoes
- 1½ cups frozen peas, thawed
- 2 tablespoons Dijon mustard
- 3 tablespoon red wine vinegar
- 1 tablespoon honey
- 1½ teaspoon dried oregano
- ½ teaspoon garlic powder

Directions

Place pasta into boiling water; return to boil and cook until tender. Drain. Add pasta, spinach, tomatoes, peas, and dressing; toss. Chill and serve.

Dressing: Combine honey, mustard, vinegar, oregano and garlic powder. Mix until combined.

Calories 340; Total fat 8g; Saturated fat 1g; Cholesterol 0mg; Sodium 200mg; Total Carbohydrates 56g; Dietary fiber 6g; Sugar 15g; Protein 13g

FOOD SAFETY TIP

Remember to wash spinach thoroughly before use. Spinach should always be stored in the refrigerator.

IN THE GARDEN

Thinking about growing spinach? Use the following tips to help you grow spinach for your family:



- Plant in early spring two weeks before the last predicted frost.
- Do not plant seeds in temperatures above 90 °F.
- Scatter seeds on soil as thinly as possible, 12 inches between plants.
- Harvest when leaves are small and tender, around 40 to 72 days after planting.
- Keep moist, but avoid over watering.

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I CAN HELP BY

- Measuring the ingredients.
- Pouring ingredients into baking dish.
- Placing salad ingredients in the salad bowl.
- Helping with clean up after the meal.

BUDGET TIP FOR BUYING MORE FRUITS AND VEGETABLES

How does it taste? When trying new fruits and vegetables, buy in small amounts. Taste test before you change your grocery list.



LET'S GET MOVING

Try this fun game with your preschoolers:

JUMP AND HEAR THE BUBBLES POP!

Materials: bubble wrap and clothes pins

Tape bubble wrap to the floor. Have children jump as far as they can. When they land, the bubble wrap will pop. Mark with the clothes pin where they landed. Take turns jumping with your child. Challenge children to jump farther each time. Take a break from jumping and count how many bubbles they were able to clear.



FUN FACTS

DID YOU KNOW:

Spinach is the vegetable the character Popeye ate to gain super strength in order to defeat Brutus/Bluto.

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