



SPINACH

Spinach has coarse, bright green leaves, which can vary from smooth to very “crinkly.” Baby leaf spinach has young and tender leaves. Cut the leaves away from their strong central ribs and rinse carefully as soil may be caught in the leaf folds. The thick leaves are well suited to cooking; just keep in mind that they will shrink in volume. The easiest way to cook spinach is to shake the leaves well after rinsing and soften them in a saucepan or skillet with a pat of butter or some oil, then season them with salt and pepper. Or briefly blanch the leaves in boiling water, plunge into iced water, and squeeze out the liquid. Add blanched leaves to risottos, stews, or vegetable soups.

Fry spinach together with onions, garlic, tomatoes, or mushrooms. Serve as it is or use to make an omelet by adding lightly whisked eggs. Fill puff pastry for a pie with a mixture of fried spinach, leek, garlic, and feta cheese. Shredded spinach can also be stirred into a bowl of oven-roasted root vegetables.

Spinach contains nitrates, which can be converted to nitrites in the body, so it should not be given to infants or children under one year old.

Baby leaf spinach has little flavor or texture when cooked. Add raw to pasta dishes just before serving or to mixed summer salads. Wilted leaves regain their firmness when briefly placed in iced water.

STORING

Rinse spinach, shake off water, and store in the fridge wrapped in a kitchen towel. Or tie the stems together, blanch in boiling salted water, plunge into iced water, drain, and freeze.

SEASON

In cooler climates, spinach can be planted in early spring, but usually it is a cool-season, fall crop.

GOES WELL WITH

Spinach goes well with, for example, mushrooms, beets, garlic, lemon, chili, ginger, nutmeg, goat cheese, feta cheese, eggs, fish, and bacon.

< Spinach with mushrooms and red onion.