

# VEGGIE OF THE MONTH - Collards & Kale

NC Cooperative Extension - Cleveland County Center

December, 2014



If you are looking for ways to eat more nutritiously, adding leafy greens to your diet is a great way to accomplish this goal. The word

“greens” is commonly used to describe a variety of leafy green vegetables including collards, kale, spinach, mustard & turnip greens, as well as dark salad greens such as romaine & leaf lettuce.

## Nutrition Benefits:

Collards and kale are packed with nutrients and have many health benefits. Greens are an excellent source of:

- Vitamin A (important for healthy skin & eyes)
- Vitamin C (helps resist infections & heals wounds)
- Folate, (a B-vitamin important to new cell production & maintenance, key for women of child-bearing age)
- Minerals: iron, calcium; other nutrients: antioxidants & phytochemicals
- Dietary fiber

Leafy greens can help maintain a strong immune system, reduce the risk of some types of cancer, and other chronic diseases, i.e. heart disease, high blood pressure and stroke. When added to a diet rich in vitamin D and calcium, they help maintain strong bones and teeth.

Greens are: fat free, cholesterol free, low in sodium and calories.

Collards are grown in other parts of the country, but they are often thought of as a ‘southern’ vegetable. Does your family practice the well-known southern tradition of eating collard greens and black-eyed peas on New Year’s Day to bring wealth in the New Year? Many southern families do!

This delicacy can be enjoyed for special occasions as well as for everyday meals.

## Did You Know?

Collards are the oldest & most primitive member of the cabbage family and are a close relative of kale. They are the official vegetable of South Carolina.

Greens have been cooked/used for thousands of years. Collards, kale and many other leafy greens are available year round. However they are cool season crops and are best in spring and fall. Look for a variety of greens at local farmers markets, vegetable stands and grocery stores during December.

## Selection Tips

- All greens are best when dark green, young, tender & fresh.
- Smaller leaves and bunches will be more tender.
- Avoid leaves that are yellowed, wilted, or that have insect damage.
- Remember greens ‘cook-down’ approximately one-quarter or more from their original volume; purchase accordingly – 1 pound raw kale yields about 2 cups cooked kale.



## Storage Tips

Wrap un-washed greens in damp paper towels and place in a plastic bag. Store open plastic bag in vegetable crisper; use within 3-5 days.

## Preparation Tips

To prepare collards: cut bunch at base; tear each large leaf from its thick center stem, discard thick/tough stems (smaller, tender leaves do not need to be stripped).

*All vegetables must be washed before being cut up.* To remove soil/grit, wash leafy greens thoroughly in lukewarm water. Fill a large bowl or sink with lukewarm water, add the greens and swish. Remove greens, rather than draining the water (do not soak greens). Repeat washing 3-4 times in fresh lukewarm water until no grit remains in the bottom of bowl.

Stack washed leaves on top of each other. Cut leaves in half or thirds. Stack again. OR tightly roll stacked leaves. Using a sharp knife, thinly slice the collards, then cut slices crosswise into smaller pieces.

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## Seasoned Collard Greens

2 quarts water  
2 pounds collard greens  
1 large onion, chopped fine (optional or use dried minced onion)  
1/2 teaspoon red pepper flakes (optional)  
1 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper  
6 oz. turkey ham cut into 1/2 inch cubes (about 1 cup) (optional)

Wash greens thoroughly, discarding stems and yellow leaves. Tear into small pieces. Combine the first five ingredients in a large pot and simmer for 30 minutes. Add turkey ham and simmer another 30 minutes. Serves 4

**HINT:** To use greens in salads, thoroughly drain and dry them. This allows the dressing to stick to the leaves.

Before adding strong flavored greens to soups and stews, blanch to avoid bitterness.

**To Cook:** Add washed greens to medium/large saucepan with 1/4 inch water or low-sodium broth in bottom of pan. Add salt if desired, using 1/2 tsp. salt per pound of greens (or use granular bouillon), fresh or minced onion. Bring water to a boil. Reduce heat, cover and cook until tender. Season with small amount of olive oil, butter, or ham (optional). Do not cook greens in an aluminum pan. Natural acids in the greens may pit the aluminum pan.)

1 bunch (1lb.) kale, washed and trimmed  
1-1/4 lb. all purpose potatoes, peeled and sliced  
2 small onions, chopped  
1 tablespoon margarine or butter, cut into pieces  
1/2 teaspoon fresh tarragon, minced  
1/4 teaspoon salt  
1/8 teaspoon pepper  
1-1/2 cups low-fat milk

Steam kale about 10 minutes. Drain and cool. Press out excess water and chop coarsely. In a greased, 2 quart gratin dish, alternate layers of potatoes, onions, and kale, beginning and ending with potatoes. Combine remaining ingredients and pour over potato mixture. Bake in a 350°F oven until potatoes are tender (about 30-45 minutes.) Yield 6 servings.

## Kale and Potato Gratin

## Savory Kale

2 lbs Fresh Kale  
2 teaspoons chopped onion  
1/2 teaspoon sugar  
1/2 cup water  
1 Tbs. vegetable oil (optional)  
Pepper to taste  
1/2 teaspoon marjoram

Wash kale and cut off tough stems. Place in saucepan with water, onions, marjoram, sugar and pepper. Cover and cook for 10 minutes or until tender. Add oil, mix well and serve. Serves 6.



## Kale Salad with Citrus Vinaigrette

Serves about 6, 1 cup per serving □ Prep time: 20 minutes

### Ingredients

2 bunches kale (12-14 ounces)

#### For Dressing:

2 teaspoons green onions

½ teaspoon salt

1/8 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper

2 Tablespoons fresh lemon juice

2 Tablespoons, fresh orange juice

2 teaspoons pure maple syrup

6 Tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil



### Directions

Wash and dry the kale leaves. Strip leaves from stems. Finely shred leaves with a sharp knife. Place in a serving bowl. To prepare the dressing, mince green onions. Put all the ingredients in a glass jar with a lid, and shake until emulsified. Add enough dressing to coat the kale lightly. Massage the dressing into the kale leaves with clean hands to soften the leaves. Add your favorite salad fixings. Can be made a day or even two ahead. **Notes** - Use Tuscan, lacinato or dinosaur kale. Optional add-ins: toasted pine nuts or sunflower seeds, pomegranate seeds, dried cranberries, crumbled feta, chopped avocado, cooked quinoa.

## Scrumptious Collard Greens

Prep Time: 65 minutes Serves: 8 Cups Per Serving: 1-1/2

### Ingredients

4 pounds collard greens

2 tablespoons olive oil

2-3 garlic cloves – minced (optional)

1 cup low sodium chicken or vegetable broth

1 tablespoon cider vinegar (optional)

1 teaspoon salt

1 teaspoon sugar (optional)

1/2 teaspoon crushed red pepper

### Directions

Rinse greens well. Remove stems from leaves. Cut leaves into 2" pieces. In 8 quart saucepot, heat oil over MEDIUM heat until hot. Add garlic and cook 30 seconds or until golden, stirring constantly.

Add as many collard leaves as possible, broth, vinegar, salt, sugar, and crushed red pepper, stirring to wilt greens. Add remaining greens in batches. Cover saucepot and cook greens 45 minutes or until very tender and most of liquid evaporates, stirring occasionally. **Each serving provides:** an excellent source of vitamin A, vitamin C, foliate and a good source of calcium and fiber.

**HINT:** Freeze cooking liquid for use in soups.

**To Freeze:** Select young, tender green leaves. Wash thoroughly, cut off woody stems. Water blanch collards 3 minutes and all other greens 2 minutes. Cool, drain, package, leaving ½ inch headspace. Seal, label and freeze.



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