

**PENNY SAVER NEWS**

FAX: 932-5261

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BY: Mary A. Keith, Ph.D., L.D.

Food, Nutrition and Health Agent

Renee DeMartini, Dietetic Intern

**HILLSBOROUGH COUNTY**

5339 S. County Road 579

Seffner, FL 33584-3334

PH:(813)744-5519 x 136, FAX:744-5776

e-mail:mkeith@ufl.edu

**Winter Greens**

What's loaded with fiber, vitamins, and minerals and that most American's don't get enough of? Leafy green vegetables! You might have heard that these were good for your health before, but did you ever wonder why? Leafy green vegetables are available year round, however the freshest greens in the grocery store right now are chard, kale, collard greens, and broccoli rabe (rapini). These hearty greens are not only high in fiber, they are also good sources of calcium, vitamin K, and anti-oxidants.

Anti-oxidants are substances in foods that protect our body's healthy cells from *free radicals*. Free radicals are chemicals that are produced from normal body functions, such as breathing or exercise, and lifestyle habits such as smoking. When our body's healthy cells are damaged, like in heart disease or cancer, we are more at risk for free radical damage. Vitamins A, C, and E are all anti-oxidants that protect us from free radicals. So, eat your greens to protect your body!

Kale is available in curly, ornamental, and dinosaur (Tuscan) varieties. All varieties have similar nutrition. One cup of kale contains 35 calories, two grams of fiber, and is an excellent source of vitamins A, C, and K. Vitamin K is needed for our blood to clot properly and it plays an important role in bone health. Many people do not get enough vitamin K in their diet. In one cup of raw kale you get over 600% of the suggested amount of vitamin k for one day!

Here is a quick and delicious recipe for kale chips. Remove the stem and rib from the kale leaves and rinse under cold water, dry well so the leaves will crisp in the oven. Tear the

leaves into bite-size pieces and toss with a little olive oil. Bake at 350 degrees for about 15 minutes. Add any flavorings you like for an extra kick, such as lime zest, Chile powder, sea salt, even parmesan cheese. It's a great snack recipe for kids and grown-ups alike.

One cup of collard greens has almost 50% of the vitamin A you need in one day. Vitamin A, besides being an anti-oxidant, is also involved in vision, growth, development, and immune functions. Collard greens are traditionally boiled with a ham hock or smoked turkey leg. These are usually high in sodium and fat. You can lighten up the recipe by cooking greens in low sodium broth with seasonings like garlic, onion, red pepper flakes, curry powder, or ground cloves. Add a little vinegar or lemon juice to cut some of the bitterness.

Broccoli rabe, or rapini, is a common vegetable in Italy, Spain, and China. It's loaded with all the nutrition of the other greens, but can be very bitter. Try blanching in boiling water for 3 minutes to reduce the bitterness before sautéing or using in a recipe.

Swiss chard comes with either flat or curly leaves. The stem can range in color from white to red. Swiss chard has nutrition similar to the other greens, but is also a good source of magnesium. Magnesium supports muscle and nerve function and helps to keep your blood pressure down. Magnesium also keeps your heart rhythm steady and keeps bones strong. Swiss chard, like the other greens can be prepared by boiling, steaming, sautéing, even baking! When these greens are in season they usually run about \$1.99 per pound.

If you've never tried it before, here's a recipe to get you started with eating greens. Serve it with your favorite roasted meat, like chicken or pork, and some whole grain rolls.

#### Spicy Swiss Chard with Olives

2 bunches (about 1 1/4 lbs) Swiss chard

1 tsp olive oil

1 small yellow onion sliced 1/4 inch thick

1 jalapeño pepper, chopped

1/3 cup pitted and roughly chopped brine-cured olives such as Kalamata (about 16)

1/2 cup water

Salt & Pepper

Separate leaves from the stems of the Swiss chard, wash and dry thoroughly. Roughly chop leaves, and set aside. Cut stems into 1-inch pieces. In a large skillet, heat olive oil over medium heat. Add onion, garlic, and jalapeño, and sauté until onion is translucent, about 6 minutes. Add Swiss chard stems, olives, and the water; cover, and cook 3 minutes. Stir in Swiss chard leaves; cover, and continue cooking until stems and leaves are tender, about 4 minutes. Add salt and pepper to taste. Serve immediately.