

SUKKOS VIBES

6 leafy greens your body deserves

By Esti Asher, MS, RDN, LD



Regardless of your local climate, nature is in the air at Sukkos time. We focus on making our sukkah our home and spend more time outdoors than usual. The *schach* and *arba minim* provide a leafy-green vibe. With this inspiration, let's explore leafy greens—a family of vegetables that generally contain vitamins A, C, and K, fiber, folate, calcium, iron, potassium, and antioxidants. Here are 6 leafy-green vegetables with some fun facts and food-prep suggestions for each:



Kale

A classic “super food,” kale’s popularity has gained a lot of traction. Besides for using kale in salad, a fun and delicious snack to prepare is kale chips: wash and check kale, place on a baking sheet with some oil and spices, roast until crispy, and enjoy! Due to its high fiber content, kale can be very chewy, so it’s advisable to cut up into smaller pieces when using in salads or other dishes. Also, massaging kale in lemon juice and olive oil can help reduce its toughness. Another fun fact: one cup of kale provides more vitamins A and K than we need in a day!



Spinach

This versatile leafy green can be used as the base for a salad, sautéed on its own or into a stir-fry, added to pasta dishes such as lasagna, blended up into a pesto, or even added to a green smoothie, among many other possibilities. Baby spinach leaves have a uniquely soft and delicate texture. If you notice your spinach getting moist while it’s waiting to be used in the fridge, add paper towels to the container; this should extend the freshness of your spinach.



Arugula

While there are many varieties of arugula, its most popular variety has a unique peppery and nutty taste. Officially an herb, this green can be used in fresh or dried forms. Incorporating arugula into a salad is a common way to add it to your menu, but there are also more creative ways to eat this leafy green—some even enjoy it as a pizza topping!



Romaine lettuce

Perhaps one of the most popular leafy greens, romaine lettuce has a nice crunch, along with a mild taste. Besides for being a great base for a salad, because of its structure and firmness, romaine lettuce is a particularly fitting component in wraps or sandwiches—or alternatively, as the wrapper itself.



Cabbage

Holipches, anyone? This leafy green (or purple) vegetable is particularly versatile and has a surprisingly high refrigerator shelf life. It can be enjoyed raw, cooked, or even fermented into sauerkraut. If you're looking for a pop of color in your vegetable dish, adding shredded purple cabbage is a great way to pack in nutrition and vibrancy.



Bok choy

Also referred to as pak choi or Chinese cabbage, this leafy green is native to China and is a common ingredient within Asian cuisine. Bok choy can be purchased as either baby leaves or mature bigger stalks; whichever size you choose, select stalks with bright green leaves without any wilting or brown spots. These stalks can be eaten raw or cooked in a variety of ways. Some ingredients often incorporated into a bok choy dish include soy sauce, rice vinegar, honey, and sesame oil.

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Tea for Life

If sipping tea in the cozy Sukkah is part of your Yom Tov enjoyment, this one's for you. Countless studies have already proven the myriad benefits of green tea. Now, new research emphasizes the benefit of drinking black tea as well. Led by a team from the National Cancer Institute (part of the National Institutes of Health), this study took place in England, where black tea consumption is common.

The prospective study included almost a half a million people in the UK, and it showed that increased tea consumption led to a decrease in mortality. The study concluded that two or more cups of black tea per day correlated with a 9–13 percent lower risk of death from any cause in comparison to those participants who did not drink tea. In particular, the tea was found to help lower the risk of death from cardiovascular disease, stroke, and ischemic heart disease. The benefit was seen regardless of sugar and/or milk added or the temperature of the tea.

Another Reason to Eat Chocolate? Sign Me Up!

New research from the University of Surrey, published in *Frontiers in Nutrition*, found the specific flavanols in cocoa helped decrease blood pressure and reduce arterial stiffness. Researchers followed 11 healthy participants as they consumed either cocoa flavanol capsules or placebo capsules; they were also given a blood pressure monitor and finger clip to determine the pulse and arterial stiffness.

In addition to the findings that cocoa helped decrease blood pressure and reduce arterial stiffness, the researchers also determined that these outcomes were only seen if the blood pressure and arterial stiffness levels were high to begin with. Interestingly, the results were seen approximately eight hours after cocoa consumption. Further research is needed to determine more specific recommendations, but the more cocoa and less sugar your piece of chocolate contains, the more of these particular health benefits you're bound to derive from your treat. ♡

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