



Spinach **Fact Sheet**



Where did it come from?

Spinach is thought to be of Persian origin. It was first brought to Europe in the ninth century when it was introduced to Spain by Persian Arabs, who gave the plant its name. It was also grown in Italy as a Lenten food and was planted in the fall and picked in February, just in time for Lent, when meat cannot be consumed. Since the early 19th century, spinach has become a versatile and commonly used vegetable in the United States.






Where does it grow?

Spinach is grown throughout the country including Alaska, California, Connecticut, Kansas, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, North Carolina, Ohio, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, South Carolina, Texas, Utah, Virginia and Washington. California is responsible for over one half of the production of spinach in the United States. Texas is the next largest producer of spinach, yielding one third of the total crop production. New Jersey has significant acreage of spinach grown throughout the state.




How does it grow?

Spinach is a green, leafy plant that grows close to the ground. The stems of the leaves grow straight up from the ground in clusters. Spinach is composed of a taproot, which is a type of root that grows downwards into the soil, with branching roots toward the surface of the soil. Leaves usually grow 6 to 8 inches long. Spinach is considered a hardy cool season crop, which can be grown almost anywhere within the United States, but grows best in 50°- 60°F temperatures. It is available to purchase year-round. Its best seasons are in the fall and spring because it grows good in cool, damp weather.

Is it healthy?

-  Good source of iron, fiber, folic acid, magnesium and manganese
-  To improve iron absorption in spinach, eat vitamin C rich foods such as orange juice, citrus fruits or tomatoes with your spinach
-  Provides high amount of vitamin A and good amounts of vitamins C and K
-  Contains more protein than most other vegetables
-  Contains the phytochemical (*pronounce "fight-o-chemical"*) lutein (*pronounce "loo-teen"*) which keeps your eyes healthy

How do you pick good ones?

-  Select green and crisp leaves with a fresh, sweet fragrance
-  Spinach leaves should have a springy texture
-  Avoid leaves that are limp, damaged or spotted

☺ FUN FACTS! ☺

Spinach

Did you know...

- ☺ **Did you know there are three different varieties of spinach?**
(Flat or Smooth Leaf which has smooth leaves, Savoy which has curly leaves and Semi-Savoy which has slightly curly leaves.)
- ☺ **Did you know that spinach is good for you?**
- ☺ **Did you know you can find spinach in your local supermarket in the following forms --- fresh, canned or frozen?**
- ☺ **Did you know spinach contains phytochemicals** (*pronounce "fight-o-chemicals"*), **which helps protect themselves from insects and helps protect your health too?**
- ☺ **Did you know eating and preparing spinach is simple because it can be eaten raw or cooked?**
- ☺ **Did you know raw spinach provides 3 grams of protein per 3 cup serving?**
- ☺ **Did you know spinach can contain a lot of grainy dirt particles and, therefore, should be washed thoroughly and gently to avoid tearing the leaves?**
- ☺ **Did you know slightly damp spinach can be steamed or microwaved without adding any additional water?**

Remember ...

Include 5 - 9 servings of fruits and vegetables per day!