

XCentric Ideas

*Medieval artists extracted green pigment from **spinach**
to use as an ink or paint.*



Spinach facts ...

It's wiser to choose tender **baby spinach** leaves. The larger the leaves, the more mature they are and more likely to be tough or stringy.

It's better to eat **fresh** spinach. When you freeze it, it loses nutritional values.

In 1533, Catherine de' Medici, Queen of France at the time, enjoyed spinach so much that she ate it at every meal. To this day, dishes made with spinach are known as "**Florentine**" because her birth place was Florence.

Popeye the Sailor Man is well known for becoming strong by eating spinach. However, this portrayal was based on incorrect calculations of its **iron content**. German scientist Emil von Wolff misplaced a decimal point, making the iron content 10 times more than what it actually is. Iron in spinach is 3.5 g/100g, not 35g/100g.

Spinach **consumption** is the greatest in the Northeast and Western United States.

Consumption of spinach is highest in women aged **40 and over**, but the least is amongst teen girls.

Alma, Arkansas (population approx. 4,700), holds an annual **spinach festival** each April, organized by the Alma Chamber of Commerce. Alma proclaims itself to be the "spinach capital of the world", a title also claimed by Crystal City, Texas. Alma is the home of "Allen Canning Company" which cans and ships spinach.

Baked Spinach Chips

Seriously good! Low fat, crispy and salty!

Baby spinach leaves
Salt
Pepper, if you like

Cover a baking sheet with parchment/baking paper and lay the spinach in a single layer on top. Sprinkle with salt, pepper, herbs...



Bake in an oven preheated to 180 oC for around 7 minutes.

Maybe a bit more, maybe a bit less. They turn crispy and wafer thin. Carefully peel paper and enjoy.

Caprese Bites

Baby spinach leaves, rinsed, patted dry with dish towel (or dry in salad spinner)

Baby tomatoes, halved

Mozzarella/Cheddar/Gouda cheese slices

Spinach pesto or Basil pesto

Fresh basil leaves, rinsed

Olive oil

Balsamic vinegar

Start with baby spinach leaves. Follow with basil leaf, sliced cheese, baby tomato and pesto.

Serve immediately – everyone can drizzle over Olive oil and Balsamic vinegar to their taste.

Perfect with sundowners.





Spinach Pesto

- 150g fresh spinach leaves
- 20g fresh basil leaves
- 75 g grated Parmesan cheese (*I used powdered Parmesan*)
- ½ cup toasted pine nuts/walnuts
- ½ lime, juice
- 5 tbsp olive oil
- ¼ tsp sea salt

Place spinach and basil in food processor, mix and scrape sides. Add the parmesan cheese. Add the oil, lime juice & pine nuts/walnuts and mix well. Scrape the sides. Season with salt to taste.

If desired, freeze in ice cube trays or small containers. Will keep in the fridge for at least a week, or for months in the freezer. When the cubes are well frozen, pop them out and seal them inside a plastic bag.

Clever idea if you have loads of spinach to use.

Use Spinach Pesto

I haven't tested these!!

Pesto Pizza: Split a loaf of French bread and brush with pesto. Top with salami (optional), shredded mozzarella and grated parmesan. Broil till cheese melts. *(Or top a pizza base with these ingredients and bake it.)*

Pesto Mayo: Spread pesto mixed with mayonnaise on toasted bread; fill with crisp pancetta, sliced tomato and arugula.

Pesto Green Beans: Toss steamed green beans with some pesto and lemon juice to taste.

Pesto Potato Salad: Cook 1 kg quartered new potatoes in salted boiling water till tender; drain & cool slightly. Whisk 1 cup mayonnaise, 3 tbsp pesto & juice of 1 lemon; toss with potatoes and 1 cup diced celery.

Pesto Chicken Salad: Whisk 3 tbsp pesto with $\frac{1}{4}$ cup each mayonnaise and sour cream. Stir in 4 cups chopped cooked chicken, $\frac{1}{2}$ cup chopped celery & $\frac{1}{4}$ cup each chopped red onion, walnuts and crisp bacon.

Pesto Egg Salad: Whisk $\frac{1}{4}$ cup mayonnaise, 2 tbsp each pesto and olive oil & 1 tbsp lemon juice. Fold in 8 chopped hard-boiled eggs, 1 cup chopped celery & 2 tbsp minced red onion.

Pesto Croutons: Toss 4 cups bread cubes, 3 tbsp pesto and 2 tbsp olive oil. Spread on baking sheet; bake 20 minutes at 180 o C.

Pesto Steak: Mix $\frac{1}{4}$ cup pesto, 2 tbsp white wine vinegar & 1 tbsp hot water. Grill or broil 500 – 700g skirt steak; brush with the pesto and serve.

Pesto Roast Chicken: Mix the juice of 1 lemon, $\frac{1}{3}$ cup pesto and 1 tsp red pepper flakes; rub onto a 3 kg chicken. Stuff with garlic and lemon. Roast in a 190 oC, about 2 hours. Or grill in a Weber.

Pesto Mash: Boil 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ kg peeled russet potatoes until tender. Mash with 1 cup milk, $\frac{1}{2}$ cup grated parmesan, $\frac{1}{4}$ cup olive oil and 3 tbsp pesto.

Spinach Hummus

400g can chickpeas, drained and rinsed
1 clove garlic, minced
2 cups fresh spinach, packed
1/4 cup tahini* (*recipe below*)
1/4 cup water
2 tablespoons olive oil
1 1/2 lemons, juiced
salt and pepper

Ideal way to use spinach.



In food processor add chickpeas, garlic and spinach. Pulse until combined, about 20 seconds. Scrape down the sides. Whisk together tahini, water, olive oil, lemon juice, salt & pepper. Turn food processor on & stream in liquid slowly. Once all liquid is added stop the food processor & scrape down sides again. Taste and adjust for seasoning and pulse until fully combined.

How to make tahini using only 2 ingredients! Make a little or a lot as needed.

sesame seeds
olive oil (not extra-virgin)

Toast sesame seeds gently over low heat stirring often, about ten minutes, they don't need to take on a lot of color. Remove from heat and allow to cool.

For every cup of sesame seeds start with 2-3 tablespoons olive oil and add more as needed. Make a little or a lot. Add the sesame seeds to the bowl of a food processor along with 1/4 cup of olive oil for every cup of seeds, pulse until a thick paste forms, scrape down the sides, and add more olive oil if needed until it reaches a consistency you like. Store in glass jar tightly covered in refrigerator.

I haven't tested these!!

Use Spinach Hummus

Hummus 'mayo': Use hummus instead of mayonnaise as a spread when making sandwiches and wraps.

Hummus salad dressing: Blend hummus, vinegar, and salt and pepper for an instant dressing.

Hummus sarmie: Blend hummus with chopped eggs, chicken, tuna, or other cooked seafood for a tangy, protein-rich sandwich filling.

Hummus Avo: Mound several tablespoons of hummus into an avocado half for a quick mini-meal.

Hummus egg: Mash hummus with cooked egg yolks to make a filling for devilled eggs.

Hummus spread: Spread toast or bagels with hummus, rather than butter or cream cheese.

Hummus mushrooms: Grill or broil Portobello mushroom caps and then top with a tablespoon of hummus.

Hummus sauce: Serve a bowl of hummus as a sauce for kebabs of all kinds.

Hummus pasta: Toss hot cooked pasta with hummus, season with cracked black pepper & sprinkle with chopped fresh chives or parsley.

Hummus pizza: Spread hummus on a pizza crust, top with roasted vegetables and olives & bake at 220 oC for about 10 minutes.

Hummus fish: Spread hummus lightly on fish fillets, top with herb-seasoned bread crumbs, and bake at 200 oC for 10 to 15 minutes, or until the fish flakes easily with a fork.

Recipe: <http://oldwayspt.org>

Spinach Pizza Crust/Wrap

2 cups raw spinach leaves
1 x-large egg
1 cup grated cheese
spices (salt, pepper, and seasoning salt - a sprinkle of each)

Brilliant!!!!!!! Absolutely love it!

Preheat oven to 220 oC. Line 1 pizza pan (or loose-bottom cake pan) with parchment/baking paper. (**DO NOT** skip the parchment paper. Where the crust touched the pan it stuck horribly.) Set aside.

In a blender, blend spinach until it is a baby food consistency. Add egg and pulse until combined.



Add in cheese and spices and pulse until just combined. Spread evenly in prepared pizza pan.

Bake at 425 for about 15 minutes. Edges will be browned and crispy.

Top with pizza sauce & toppings and place under grill till cheese is melted.

Or use as a wrap.

Double quantities for 2 crusts. Prepare a few in advance and serve.

Spinach Quiche

3 cups packed fresh baby spinach leaves
2 x-large eggs
¼ cup chunky cottage cheese
½ cup grated Cheddar cheese

Boiling water
¼ cup milk
¼ cup Parmesan cheese (powder)
salt, pepper and herbs to taste

Preheat oven to 180 oC. Grease a 6 hole muffin pan (big muffins). Pour boiling water over the spinach leaves. Leave for a few minutes and drain well. Pat the spinach dry.

Mix the spinach with the cottage cheese, Cheddar cheese and Parmesan cheese. Season. Pour the mixture into the muffin pan.

Beat the eggs and milk together and pour over the mixture.

Bake for 25 minutes, or till centres are set.

Perfect as a main course, side course or a snack.

Delightful!!



Recipe: my own