

Vegetable of the Month

Lettuce



Nutrition Facts

Serving Size (75g)

Servings Per Container

Amount Per Serving

Calories 15 **Calories from Fat 0**

% Daily Value*

Total Fat 0g **0%**

 Saturated Fat 0g **0%**

Cholesterol 0mg **0%**

Sodium 15mg **1%**

Total Carbohydrate 3g **1%**

 Dietary Fiber 2g **8%**

 Sugars 0g

Protein 1g

Vitamin A 30% • Vitamin C 8%

Calcium 4% • Iron 4%

*Percent Daily Values are based on a 2,000 calorie diet. Your daily values may be higher or lower depending on your calorie needs:

	Calories:	2,000	2,500
Total Fat	Less than	65g	80g
Saturated Fat	Less than	20g	25g
Cholesterol	Less than	300mg	300mg
Sodium	Less than	2,400mg	2,400mg
Total Carbohydrate		300g	375g
Dietary Fiber		25g	30g

Calories per gram:

Fat 9 • Carbohydrate 4 • Protein 4

This vegetable is widely popular throughout the world and is readily available in supermarkets year round with hundreds of varieties to choose from. Iceberg used to dominate the selections but other varieties are now moving to the forefront. Most domestic varieties are from California and imported lettuce typically arrives from Europe.

History

The lettuce that we see today, actually started out as a weed around the Mediterranean basin. Served in dishes for more than 4500 years, lettuce has certainly made its mark in history with tomb painting in Egypt and identification of different types of lettuces by various Greek scholars. Christopher Columbus introduced lettuce to the new world and from there, lettuce in the United States began cultivating.

Benefits

Most dark greens are good sources of Vitamin C, beta-carotene, iron, calcium, folate, and dietary fiber. The rule of thumb is, usually, the darker the greens, the more nutritious the leaf.

Types

There are four main types of lettuce and under each type there are different varieties.



Butterhead (includes Boston and Bibb)

Loose heads, grassy green leaves, butter texture, mild flavor. Good examples are Boston lettuce, which looks like a blooming rose, and Bibb lettuce that has a small cup-shaped appearance.



Crisphead

The least nutritious of the salad greens, this pale green lettuce takes on the cabbage appearance with its leaves more tightly packed together. An example is the Iceberg lettuce. It's known for the crispy texture and very mild flavor.



Looseleaf

This variety doesn't grow to form lettuce heads, but instead the leaves are joined at the stem. Good examples of this variety include: oak leaf, red leaf, and green leaf.



Romaine or Cos

This lettuce has gained tremendous popularity in the past decade as the key ingredient in Caesar salads. It has a loaf-like shape with darker outer leaves. Its strong taste and crispy texture has been favored by those who like Iceberg lettuce.

Varieties



Arugula (rocket or roquette)

This variety used to be hard find, but can now be found at many supermarkets. This variety is characterized by small, flat leaves with long stems, quite similar looking to dandelion leaves, and a peppery taste. This lettuce is usually paired with other varieties to balance out the taste.



Belgian endive or French endive

This leaf is a family member of chicory and escarole, with tightly packed leaves and bullet-like shape. Creamy yellow or white in color, slightly bitter in taste, but crisp in texture.



Chicory or curly endive

This leaf is slightly bitter, with darker outer leaves and paler or even yellow leaves towards the center. The leaves itself are ragged edged on long thin stems.



Escarole

Another member of the chicory family, this lettuce has broad wavy leaves and a milder taste than chicory.



Mâche or lamb's lettuce or field salad

With a fingerlike shape, velvety feel, and mild taste, this variety is usually sold bunched together with its roots, at an expensive price due to its delicate and perishable nature.



Radicchio

This variety looks like red cabbage, but it's actually a chicory family member. This leaf is typically used for an accent in salads because of its steep cost as most radicchio lettuce arrives from Italy.

Photos courtesy of Cook's Thesaurus

Selection and Storage

Lettuce is a delicate vegetable and great care should be taken when selecting and storing. Most lettuce is showcased on ice or in refrigeration. When selecting your leaves, be sure that they are fresh and crisp, with no signs of wilting, slim, or dark spots or edges. Remember when selecting your lettuce that the darker outer leaves are the most nutritious.

Lettuce tends to keep well in plastic bags in the crisper section of the refrigerator. Iceberg lettuce keeps the best, lasting around two weeks, while Romaine, ten days, and butterheads types and endives lasts approximately four days. The very delicate greens don't last very long, so it's best to buy only as much as you need at one time and use immediately.

Salad greens should not be stored near fruits that produce ethylene gases (like apples) as this will increase brown spots on the lettuce leaves and increase spoilage. Greens that are bought in bunches should be checked for insects. Those leaves that have roots should be placed in a glass of water with a bag over the leaves and then placed in the refrigerator.

Preparation

Generally lettuce is eaten raw, so consider removing any browned, slimy, or wilted leaves. For all lettuce types, you should thoroughly wash and 'dry' the leaves to remove any dirt or lingering insects. If you eat lettuce often, it's wise to invest in a salad spinner. Simply rinse the leaves and place in the spinner to remove the excess water.

In addition to their most common use in salads, you can also braise, steam, sauté and even grill certain lettuce varieties to create a wonderful and different taste treat. Try halving a head of radicchio or romaine lengthwise, and brush on some extra virgin olive oil, and grill until they soften and just begin to brown-absolutely delicious.

Make Lettuce Part of Your 5 A Day Plan



Here are some easy ways to include lettuce into your meals:

- Add lettuce to ALL your sandwiches.
- Try a different mix of lettuce like European or baby greens for a tasty twist to your usual salad.
- Grilling tonight? Why not try spritzing some extra virgin olive oil onto romaine or radicchio leaves and grill until slightly soft — these make an excellent hors d'oeuvre.
- Get creative, include any variety of lettuce into meals as plate liners you can eat!

Recipes

Sweet and Sour Leafy Green Salad

Makes 4 servings

Each serving equals six and one half 5 A Day servings

Source: Produce for Better Health

5 cups Romaine lettuce leaves, torn and lightly packed

3 cups spinach leaves, lightly packed

2 cups mushrooms, sliced

2 oranges, peeled and sliced

1 cup pitted prunes, halved

1/2 cup red onion, sliced

1/2 cup nonfat honey-mustard dressing

1/4 black pepper, coarsely ground

Toss all ingredients in a large bowl.

Nutritional analysis per serving: calories 185, protein 5g, fat 1g, percent calories from fat 0%, cholesterol 0mg, carbohydrates 45g, fiber 7g, sodium 307mg

Zesty Oriental Chicken Salad

Makes 4 servings

Each serving equals one 5 A Day serving

Source: Produce for Better Health

1/3 cup rice vinegar
8 tsp reduced sodium soy sauce
2 Tbsp sugar
2 Tbsp chopped cilantro
1 Tbsp fresh ginger, minced
1 clove garlic, minced
1/2 tsp sesame oil
1/2 tsp red pepper flakes
4 (3 oz each) boned and skinned chicken breast halves
2 cup broccoli florets
2 carrots, cut into 1 1/2" long matchsticks
6 oz pitted prunes, snipped into halves
3 green onions, sliced
4 lettuce leaves

To make dressing/marinade, in medium bowl whisk vinegar, soy, sugar, cilantro, ginger, garlic, sesame oil and pepper flakes. Remove 1/4 cup of mixture to shallow 8-inch baking dish; place chicken breasts in baking dish. Turn to coat on both sides. Let chicken marinate 30 minutes. Place remaining ingredients except lettuce in bowl with dressing; toss to coat completely.

Let stand 30 minutes. Grill or broil chicken, basting with marinade, about 10 minutes until chicken juices run clear, turning once. Cut each breast into 1/4 inch slices across the grain.

To serve, line each of 4 plates with 1 lettuce leaf; top with vegetable mixture, dividing equally. Place 1 sliced chicken breast on each place.

Nutritional analysis per serving: calories 267, protein 23g, fat 4g, percent calories from fat 12%, cholesterol 46mg, carbohydrates 42g, fiber 6g, sodium 440mg

Yam Salad

Makes 8 servings

Each serving equals one 5 A Day serving

Source: Produce for Better Health

6 yams, scrubbed (about 8 oz each)
3/4 cup plain nonfat yogurt
1/4 cup nonfat mayonnaise
2 Tbsp lemon juice
2 Tbsp chopped chives, or 1 Tbsp dried chives
1 Tbsp curry powder
1/2 cup red onion, finely chopped
1/2 cup celery, chopped finely
Red leaf lettuce
1 tsp chopped cilantro, for garnish

Pierce the yams with a fork. Place on a double layer of paper towels in a circle on the floor of the microwave oven, leaving about 1 inch between each one. Microwave on high for 10 to 14 minutes, or until tender, turning once during cooking. Let stand for 5 to 10 minutes, with each wrapped in a paper towel. Cool, then peel and cut the yams into 1-inch cubes.

In a medium bowl, whisk together the yogurt, mayonnaise, lemon juice, chives, and curry powder. In a large bowl, combine the yams, onion, and celery. Pour the dressing over the yams and toss lightly to combine. Add salt and pepper to taste. Arrange lettuce leaves on individual plates or on a large serving platter and mound the salad on top. Sprinkle with cilantro just before serving.

Note: If preparing the salad the night before, reserve about a third of the dressing. Bring the salad to room temperature and stir in the remainder of the dressing.

Nutritional analysis per serving: calories 237, protein 6g, fat 1g, percent calories from fat 0%, cholesterol 1mg, carbohydrates 57g, fiber 10g, sodium 122mg

Sirloin Citrus Salad

Makes 4 servings

Each serving equals two and one-half 5 A Day servings

Source: Produce for Better Health

1 lb boneless, beef top sirloin steak, lean cut 1" thick, well trimmed

1 tsp olive oil

4 cups romaine lettuce, torn

2 oranges, peeled and separated into segments

2 Tbsp orange juice (for vinaigrette)

2 Tbsp red wine vinegar (for vinaigrette)

2 tsp olive oil (for vinaigrette)

2 tsp honey (for vinaigrette)

1 1/4 tsp Dijon-style mustard (for vinaigrette)

Prepare Citrus Vinaigrette by thoroughly combining ingredients; reserve.

Cut beef steak into 1/8 inch thick strips; cut each strip in half. Heat oil in a large nonstick skillet over medium-high heat. Stir-fry beef (1/2 at a time) 1 to 2 minutes. Remove with slotted spoon; season with salt, if desired. Toss lettuce, beef and oranges in large bowl. Drizzle with Citrus Vinaigrette. Garnish with strawberries, if desired. Serve immediately.

Nutritional analysis per serving: calories 223, protein 23g, fat 7g, percent of calories from fat 28%, cholesterol 63mg, carbohydrates 13, fiber 3g, sodium 72mg

Green and Orange Salad

Makes 8 servings

Each serving equals one 5 A Day serving

Source: Produce for Better Health

8 oranges, navel

2 Tbsp chives, snipped

1 1/2 Tbsp olive oil

1 clove garlic, minced

1/4 cup parsley, minced

3 Tbsp orange juice

1 Tbsp Dijon mustard

Boston or Bibb lettuce

Peel and section the oranges, removing all the membranes. Place in a large bowl. Sprinkle with the parsley and chives. In a small bowl, whisk together the orange juice, oil, mustard and garlic. Pour over the oranges and toss well. Serve on a bed of lettuce leaves.

Nutritional analysis per serving: calories 100, protein 2g, fat 3g, percent calories from fat 33%, cholesterol 0mg, carbohydrates 18g, fiber 4g, sodium 27mg

New Caesar-Style Salad

Makes 4 servings

Each serving equals one and one half 5 A Day servings

Source: Produce for Better Health

3 1/2" thick slices French bread, cubed
1/4 cup lemon juice
1 tsp olive or vegetable oil
1 tsp anchovy paste
1 clove Elephant garlic, peeled and finely minced
1/4 tsp pepper
3 cups Bibb lettuce, torn
3 cups Romaine lettuce, torn
2 Tbsp Parmesan cheese, grated

Spray a baking sheet with aerosol cooking spray. Sprinkle bread cubes on baking sheet; bake in a 350°F oven for 10 to 12 minutes or until toasted. Meanwhile, in a small bowl stir together lemon juice, oil, anchovy paste, elephant garlic, and pepper. Remove toasted bread from oven; place in a shallow bowl. Sprinkle 2 Tbsp of the dressing mixture over croutons; toss to coat.

In a salad bowl toss together Bibb and Romaine lettuce. Add croutons, remaining dressing, and Parmesan cheese, toss well. Serve.

Nutritional analysis per serving: calories 92, protein 6g, fat 2 g, percent calories from fat 24%, cholesterol 3mg, carbohydrates 25g, fiber 1g, sodium 177 mg