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## food ideas

# Quick, Fast and Easy: Summer Greens

By Madeleine Greey | 20/07/2006



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It's prime time for leafy green vegetables! Summer's here and delicious, fresh greens like spinach, rapini and kale are perky, crisp and loaded with flavour. Learn how to make these nutritional giants an easy part of your kitchen routine.

### Spinach

Poor Popeye had to turn to a can for his spinach-fix, but you have three great varieties of fresh spinach to choose from: baby, flat-leafed and savoy (a.k.a. curly). Baby varieties are the easiest to prepare, since most are sold pre-washed. When washing big bunches of flat or curly-leafed spinach, watch out for sand. This veggie usually needs several thorough washes to become grit-free.

**Nutrition:** One cup of raw spinach contains just 7 calories. It's also a good source of vitamin A, folate and vitamin C. While there's lots of calcium and iron in spinach, it's not readily absorbable.

**Prep Tips:** Watch out, it shrinks! A pound to a pound-and-a-half of fresh spinach will reduce to just one cup of cooked spinach, which serves two.

You want a serving... not a spoonful.



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You can steam, sauté or microwave fresh spinach. You don't need to use any extra water. It can cook in the water left clinging to the leaves after washing. Serve fish or grilled chicken on a bed of baby spinach leaves; they'll wilt slightly and taste great.

### Rapini

This veggie (also known as broccoli rabe) is favoured among Italians who adore its pleasant, slightly bitter flavour. A member of the cabbage family, rapini resembles a strange head of broccoli with leaves enlarged and florets shrunk! All of it is edible: stems, leaves, heads and flowers. Just trim the stem ends.

**Nutrition:** Rapini is an excellent source of vitamins A and C and a good source of calcium and iron. Plus, it's low in calories and a good source of fibre.

**Prep tips:** Just treat it like broccoli and you're off! The stems take longer to cook than the leaves and buds, so cook first. The pungent, earthy flavour of rapini marries well with such mild foods as eggs, rice, polenta and potatoes. Try tossing it with pasta, olive oil, roasted garlic and a little Parmesan for an easy supper.

### Kale

This big, cumbersome bunch of curly-edged leaves is bursting with vitamins, minerals and phytochemicals, but many people avoid it. Give kale a chance and it will repay you with its sweet, cabbage flavour and interesting texture; it stays quite crunchy, no matter how long you cook it.

**Nutrition:** Kale is one of the most nutritional greens you can find. It is packed with vitamins A and C plus calcium and beta-carotene.

**Prep tips:** Here's one of the best greens for soup since it never gets mushy. Boost a can of commercial soup with half a cup of thinly sliced kale. Saute kale in olive oil and top with croutons, pine nuts or toasted sesame seeds. Or try a Chinese stir-fry with garlic, ginger, salt and a little sesame oil.



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