



# TENDER GREENS

## Tell Me about Tender Greens

Tender greens are delicate leafy green vegetables with mild to slightly spicy flavor. They are typically eaten raw or wilted and make a fun addition to the salad bar. Tender greens include baby spinach, arugula, watercress, mizuna, and mache (also called lamb's lettuce or corn salad), among others. They are cool weather plants, making them a great menu option for early spring and late fall months when fewer produce items are available.

## Crediting Information

- Tender Greens are vegetables that credit toward the Vegetable meal pattern component.
- Child Nutrition Program operators should check the USDA Food Buying guide to correctly credit tender greens, as creditable volumes vary across programs.
- In School Meals, tender greens contribute to the "Dark Green" vegetable sub-group.
- Vegetables must be fresh, frozen, canned, or full-strength vegetable juice, referred to as 100% juice, to credit as a vegetable component. Dried vegetables, including beans, peas, and lentils, must be reconstituted to credit toward reimbursable meals. Please confirm crediting requirements for dried vegetables with your specialist.



## Nutrition Facts

Tender greens, like other leafy green vegetables, are packed with nutrients. Each type has its own unique nutrition makeup, but generally tender greens are great sources of vitamin A, which is important for eyesight, skin, and cell growth, and vitamin K, which supports healthy blood clotting helps bodies heal quickly. They are also generally good sources of vitamin B9 (folate), magnesium, iron, and calcium. Together, these nutrients support growth and healing throughout the body



Tender greens growing, credit: WSDA



## Selection and Storage

- Tender greens can be purchased individually or in a mix. Salad mixes like “mesclun” or “baby spring mix” often contain a blend of tender greens and baby lettuces.
- Choose tender greens that are crisp with deep green color.
- Remove leaves that are torn or badly wilted. They will have a shorter storage life and may cause other greens near them to go bad faster.
- Keep greens packed loosely in a plastic bag or airtight container. Store in refrigerator for up to 1 week.
- Avoid opening bagged greens until it is time to prepare or eat them.

## Culinary Tips

- To save cost, tender greens can be mixed with less expensive hardy greens, like cabbage.
- For a quick and easy salad, cut tender greens into bite-sized pieces, add fresh herbs, nuts or seeds, other veggies, or fruit for more flavors and textures.
- Tender greens can be added to nearly any dish to boost nutritional value. They can be finely chopped or pureed and mixed into soups, sauces, rice dishes, pastas, or casseroles. Or they can be added raw to sandwiches, wraps, or other cold dishes.

## Recipes

- [Ginger Citrus Noodle Salad Georgia Recipe for Schools](#)
- [Harvest Spinach and Apple Chicken Salad Virginia Recipe for Schools](#)
- [Chicken and Spinach Flatbread Pizza USDA Recipe for Child Care Centers](#)
- [Tuscan Grilled Cheese Sandwich USDA Recipe for Adults in CACFP](#)
- [Brown Rice Pilaf USDA Recipe for Adults in CACFP](#)

## Sourcing

- [Find tender greens](#)



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