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Listening, learning, and living together: it's the science of life.

Green Leafy Vegetables¹

Terrell Cummings and Donna Davis²

While there are plenty of people I know who say that chocolate is the only food group we need, reality reminds us that eating a variety of foods with different nutrients is necessary for good health. One food group that many Americans skimp on is the vegetable group, especially the dark green, leafy vegetables. Although young children often don't enjoy the strong taste of some deep green vegetables, serving them in a variety of ways can help them acquire a taste for these nutritional powerhouses.

As a group, the leafy greens are rich in vitamins A and C, dietary fiber, and the minerals iron and calcium (Center for Young Women's Health, 2005). The benefits of including these vegetables in your diet are impressive. For example, research indicates that a diet rich in dark green leafy vegetables lowers risk for a variety of cancers (American Institute for Cancer Research, 2007).

Leafy greens include kale, collard greens, mustard greens, and spinach, just to name a few. Many of these vegetables have pungent tastes, which can be an intimidating flavor to some people. If taste is a factor, try various preparation methods, such as combining greens into pastas and casseroles, or serving with rice or potatoes to mellow the flavor. Spinach and arugula are delicious served raw in salads.

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2. Terrell Cummings, undergraduate student, and Donna Davis, Senior Producer, Family Album Radio, Department of Family, Youth and Community Sciences, Cooperative Extension Service, Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences, University of Florida, Gainesville, FL 32611. Reviewed by Linda Bobroff, Department of Family, Youth and Community Sciences, and R. Elaine Turner, Department of Food Science and Human Nutrition, University of Florida.

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No matter how they are prepared, dark green leafy vegetables are a great nutritional boost to any diet. Green is one color you don't want to miss in your or your family's diet!

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To listen to the radio broadcast:

http://www.radiosource.net/radio_stories/green.mp3

http://www.radiosource.net/radio_stories/green.wav

References

American Institute for Cancer Research. (2007). *Foods that fight cancer: dark green leafy vegetables*. Retrieved May 8, 2007, from http://www.aicr.org/site/pageserver?page-name=dc_foods_greens

The Center for Young Women's Health at Children's Hospital Boston. (2005). *Dark green leafy vegetables*. Retrieved May 8, 2007, from <http://www.youngwomenshealth.org/leafy.html>