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Dependable Kale

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 Dependable Kale

At first glance, kale doesn’t seem like the most glamorous vegetable from the field. Those who go to the grocery store often pass by the thick, ruffled leaves in preference of kale’s close relative, cabbage. In fact, cabbage itself is often regarded as a humble vegetable, humble enough that it was eaten by the Bucket family at every meal in Charlie and the Chocolate Factory to show just how poor they were. If cabbage is humble, kale is downright primitive.

Don’t get me wrong though; kale is a favorite vegetable of mine. And from a historical perspective, it definitely can be considered primitive. Most of the familiar cole (meaning stem or cabbage) crops such as broccoli, cauliflower, cabbage, kale, and brussels sprout actually descend from one species, known as Brassica oleracea. Count ’em, one species. Human selection over thousands of years did some amazing things, similar to dog breeds; we now have everything from chihuhuhas to malamutes, even though they originally came from a common ancestor. Kale is the closest related variety to its wild progenitor, which grows on sea cliffs in southwestern Europe. Its cultivation preceeds even the Romans, and it became the green of choice during the Middle Ages because of its nutrition, ease of growth, and availability even during the cold months. In chilly Scotland and the surrounding islands, kale was relied on so much that the kitchen garden was known as the “kailyard” and the word “kail” became synonymous with food in general.

The dependable plant spread, and many cuisines around the world now utilize kale in traditional cooking. In Germany, it is used in stews and served with sausage and beer. In Kenya, collards (a close relative) are sliced thinly, sautéed with onions, and served with ugali, a cooked cornmeal dough. Some people nowadays even make kale chips, which have a similar crunch to a potato chip and are far better for you. In many cases, a simple preparation of light steaming and a drizzle of oil and garlic salt is all that’s needed. If you prefer, remove the mid-vein to avoid toughness. The sweet, pervasive flavor pairs well with cured meats, onions, and vinegar. So give kale a chance, it’s a plant with history on its side!

-By Andrew Croft

Directions
Combine all ingredients in a food processor or blender, and let soak for about an hour (not necessary if you have a really powerful blender or food processor). After soaking, puree the heck out of it until the cashews have been effectively pulverized. Add the water little by little along the way if needed or if you like thinner dressings. Makes enough for 2 or 3 salads and will keep in the fridge (sealed) for a couple of days (or longer in my experience). I also really like to add golden raisins and slivered almonds to a kale salad with this dressing.

Ingredients

• 1 T. to 1 T. Dijon mustard (or regular)
• ½ c. cashews (heaping cup)
• 1 giant garlic clove
• ¼ to ½ c. water
• 1-2 T. tamarind sauce (liquid aminos, or soy sauce will do)
• 1-2 T. worcestershire
• 1 T. olive oil
• ¼ lemon – juice & zest
• Pepper to taste

Sometimes I wonder how I am going to eat a bunch of kale. It’s unique texture and taste make it difficult to dress like a normal salad. My roommate introduced me to the most delicious kale salad dressing that made it hard not to eat kale. It pairs so well with kale and I found myself putting it on quinoa and other greens. It’s so rich and tasty. The initial batch takes a little work but once you have it you can store it and use it for weeks.

How to Store Your Fresh Greens
Have you ever wondered how to store your fresh greens? Well it is real easy; just keep them dry (wet greens are prone to browning and rotting), cool (temperatures between 36°-40°F slow their decay), in a humid environment (minimize wilting) and provide oxygen (promote respiration). Use a perforated bag or poke a few holes in the harvest bag to allow for additional oxygen. Place a dry towel or paper towel in the bag to soak up condensation and maintain high humidity. Fill loosely and avoid bruising or damaging the greens. There is no need to seal the bag because greens like oxygen. And finally remember to wash your greens before serving not before storing.

Coriander/Cilantro & Other Fresh Herbs
Cilantro is stored best in fresh water. This technique also works well for asparagus and other fresh herbs. Think of it like a bouquet of flowers. Cut the ends and set the stalks in cool water. Cilantro likes cool temperatures, so store in the fridge. However, humidity also helps keep them fresh for longer. So ideally cover herbes with plastic bag to create a miniature humidifier. And for you who are trash conscious, just save the bag for your next fresh herbes then you don’t have to worry about the landfill =). This same trick works for celery.

-The stalks stay crunchy for about 2 weeks.

-By Eric Manrique
Announcements

Have you found a simple recipe that takes just the right amount of time and effort and uses just the right amount of veggies from your share? We would love to see your recipes and ideas for uses of the produce we give you. We might even feature them in an upcoming newsletter! Email us your ideas at: organicfarm@aggiemail.usu.edu

Volunteer hours:
If you are interested in volunteering please send us an email or show up at the time above, if it is your first time we suggest coming early so we can give you the details of getting started!

Tuesday, 9 am to 12 pm, this day will consist of farm duties, such as planting, weeding, mulching, watering and fixing things!

Thursday, 9 am to 1 pm, this day will consist of harvesting produce for the CSA members. (Chance for extra produce!)

Friday, 9 am to 12 pm, this day will be like Tuesday, regular farm duties!

Missed pickup policy:
If you forget to pickup your share for the week at your scheduled time, we are so sorry but you will have to forfeit the share for the week. If you let us know a week in advance that you will be gone, we can definitely work something out so you don’t miss a share. Also, you can have a friend, neighbor, or relative come pick up your share for you if you will be gone. They just need to come at your scheduled pickup time and let us know who they are picking up for.

On the Farm News

Hello CSA members! We hope you enjoyed your share last week! We had a great first harvest. Everything has done so well thanks to Amanda’s careful planning and Chloe, Nate, Eric, and Cami working hard to help her. We want everyone to know that the shares may fluctuate in size but will likely get bigger as the season moves forward. Late summer and fall usually yield large shares. So watch for good recipes and get your creative juices flowing to fit all these beautiful veggies and herbs into your diet.

Did someone say herbs? Those delicious lettuce greens in the box aren’t the only things perking up around the farm! Right now the herb garden has sage, thyme and chives. And this is your herb garden! Which means you can come by the farm when that recipe calls for the one herb you don’t have. Not to mention it’s a fresh organic herb :) Are there any particular herbs you would like to see in the herb garden? Let us know and we will see if we can’t put our herb growing knowledge to the test.

We have all been working hard on the farm this year helping to keep it functioning and beautiful. Eric has been repairing the hoop house doors. After 5 years of use they need a little love. As an organic rule, we cannot use treated wood and after some time, untreated wood begins to fall apart. Eric is a hard worker and very handy. He’s been working long hours in the heat to give us functional hoop house doors. If you don’t know what a hoop house is, come by the farm and check ours out! They are great for season extension and are easy and relatively inexpensive to build.

We have also been transplanting a lot of plants this week into the field! New plants and seedlings added to the field include red cabbage, broccoli, carrots, turnips, and potatoes. This means we all have more great produce to look forward to!

In addition to transplanting and seeding, we have been weeding everyday. We want to make the farm pretty and keep those veggies from having any competition. The farm looks and functions better with each day and we hope that our hard work improves our efficiency and your pride in the farm we all share.

What you might see in your next box

mizuna mustard greens
benito lettuce
black seeded simpson lettuce
silverado chard
rainbow chard
parade green onion

Nate and Eric cutting the creature-like potatoes to plant in the field