The Dirt on Spinach

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The Dirt on Spinach
Spinach is that quintessential health food that seems to be the very spokes-plant for healthy eating. Jam packed with phytonutrients, antioxidants, and trace minerals, poor spinach has somehow become the target for food scares and overblown media hype. In many cases, the exaggerations outweigh any news of spinach’s fantastic benefits: it possesses anti-inflammatory properties, bone, circulatory, and eye health benefits, and slows age-related brain degeneration along with other dark greens.

You may have heard about being careful about consuming too much of this deep green veggie, though in almost all cases these fears are overblown. The most cited caution stems around the high levels of oxalic acid in spinach, which is a very common substance that gives a sour bite to many familiar fruits and veggies. Our bodies produce some of this acid on their own, too. You’d have to consume very large portions of spinach every day for a very long time to feel any effects. In reality, the only people that need to be careful around spinach are those with rare health conditions that require watching their oxalate consumption. So don’t write this veggie out! There’s far more to lose than there is to gain when spinach is off the menu!

Popeye would agree. The incredible strength he gained from downing a can of precooked spinach (eww) influenced kids to maybe, just maybe, choke down some of that slimy green stuff that made the wiry sailor beat the tar out of muscly Bluto. He was such a huge success that spinach growers of the 1930’s widely credit Popeye with saving the spinach industry. Before that time, as recently as the turn of the century, spinach was rarely on the American plate. Pretty amazing how a cartoon character can change the palate of an entire country!

Now we can enjoy it as more than just a can full of brownish-green hash. Fresh spinach really is a cut above that, and can be a real delight in salads and sandwiches, or prepared in Italian stuffed pastas or in an Indian yogurt dip (saag) and served with naan bread. Whatever you prefer to do with it, please remember that the many wonderful nutrients are lost in only a matter of days! Enjoy!

-Andrew Croft

Classic Green Monster (aka smoothie)

Yield: 1 serving/2 cups

Ingredients:
-1 cup almond milk, or milk of choice
-1 ripe banana, preferably peeled + frozen
-2 handfuls organic spinach or 1 handful kale
-1 tbsp chia seeds OR 1 tbsp ground flax (I like to use both :)
-1 tbsp nut butter, optional

Directions: Starting with the liquid, add in 1 cup of milk of your choice. Now add in the chia or flax and nut butter. Next, add in the spinach followed by the banana on top. Blend until smooth. Add in your ice cubes and blend some more. Serves about 1-2 cups.
On the Farm News
This Farm is not what I had expected it to be. As a new student to USU, I am exploring my interests. I have to admit that my interests are what create my dreams. My dreams began as babies and finally open in full bloom as they are truly being realized through my experiences. Becoming an intern on the USU Student Organic Farm I have been fortunate to connect with all of you. The basis of my appreciation for this farm was organic farming but it has grown to include you.

This week the interns here at the farm had the privilege to connect with interns from lots of other projects within the Utah Conservation Corps and AmeriCorps for a combined service project at Red Butte Gardens. I was inspired as I met other people pursuing their dreams in a similar way to myself. It was great to have this opportunity to listen to their opinions, share in their knowledge, and feel their energy. We set goals together and made plans for our near and distant futures. We talked about our experiences, our weaknesses and identified what a breakthrough would be for us as we serve in AmeriCorps. Through connecting with others we were able to better ourselves and come away with a new sense of direction. We do this together on our farm and it is thanks to your support. So please find us here and connect with us. After all you are the important part which makes this community supported program work.

Eric Manrique

To learn how to grow your own spinach visit USU extension:

Spinach in the Garden

We transplanted basil right next to the tomatoes. They are good friends.