

Real Foods that Heal
Weekly bulletin, volume 1, #9
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Spinach

This week's bulletin continues last week's theme of green leafy vegetables as an important part of your strategy for reducing breast cancer risk. Look for more bulletins along this line, as the variety of healing foods in this area is wonderful.

Last week we emphasized chard as an important and delicious food for health, recalling that research on dietary reduction of breast cancer risk gives special importance to the roles of carotenoids and folic acid (also called folate). Chard is very high in natural carotenoids but not very high in folate, but this week's healing food is a folate superstar. Spinach is near the top of the list of foods that are high in folate. Research published in the Journal of the National Cancer Institute in 2003 demonstrated that a higher level of folate in the blood is associated with a lower risk of breast cancer, especially among women who drink alcohol. Folate is an important factor in the synthesis of DNA, and if it is deficient, DNA is more likely to be made with an incorrect code in the nucleic acid sequence, making cancer more likely. And an added bonus for spinach is the high amounts of natural carotenoids in every serving (refer to bulletin 8).

Spinach can be enjoyed in countless ways. I prefer to buy fresh organic spinach leaves, and wash them thoroughly before cooking as they tend to pick up bits of good organic soil before leaving the farm! By weight, cooked or frozen spinach has about 75% as much folate as the fresh vegetable, but because it cooks down so much, a cup of cooked spinach has much more folate than a cup of raw spinach. So if you enjoy a good spinach salad, make it a nice big one; if you prefer it cooked, you can also be assured that every bite is full of cancer-preventing folate.

By the way, there's even more good news for folate: it's heart healthy, and is critical to the prevention of neural tube defects in a developing fetus (like spina bifida). So cancer prevention is only one of many great reasons to enjoy your spinach!

Spinach Pie

This is a recipe we have enjoyed for many years at home, and our grown-up children are always happy to see it when we are all together. Leftovers never stay around long for this one.

Start with one pie shell with no trans-fats (read the label and make sure it does not say "hydrogenated oils").

Use either

3 ten ounce packages of frozen chopped organic spinach or
Steam 1.5 pounds of baby spinach leaves.

Then sauté 2 to 4 cloves of crushed garlic and one medium chopped onion in olive oil.

Combine in a bowl: spinach, onion/garlic mix, 3 beaten eggs, 1 tsp salt, ½ tsp pepper, 1 ½ tsp Italian spice such as basil or oregano, ½ tsp nutmeg, and 2 cups of grated lowfat swiss cheese.

Place mixture in pieshell and bake at 350 degrees for 30 – 40 minutes. May cover with a top layer pieshell before baking if desired.

Let cool slightly before serving so that the pieces stay together.

To your health,

Robert Pendergrast, M.D.

www.realfoodsthatheal.com

P.S. You know 5 women who **deserve** to know how to reduce their cancer risk by food choices. Please forward this e-mail to them by using the link below.

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