

Real Foods that Heal
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Kale

I'd like to take this week's bulletin and introduce you to kale, if you have not already made its acquaintance. Kale is a member of the brassica family of vegetables (cruciferous vegetables), and even though it does not look like its more famous cousins like broccoli, cauliflower, and cabbage, it shares some of their best nutritional benefits. Unlike broccoli, kale does not form a head, and remains a green leafy plant with somewhat curly leaves. It's appropriate to be writing about kale at the end of September, because it is a cool season garden vegetable, and many home gardeners have traditionally planted kale and other cool season greens for a fall crop. Many people believe that the kale tastes better in fact when it is harvested after the first frost.

Kale is truly a multi-talented food! Just a quick look at the nutritional content of kale is enough to put this wonderful vegetable near the top of everyone's list. One cup of cooked kale provides your entire day's supply of vitamin A (as natural carotenoids), over 17,000 units; and it provides over 50 mg vitamin C. This combination of vitamins A and C makes kale an antioxidant powerhouse, a great ally in your body's process of cleaning up toxic reactive oxygen species (free radicals). That one cup of kale also provides a tremendous amount of vitamin K, over 1000 micrograms, which is very important for bone health and preventing excess bleeding. (Caution however: if you are on prescription blood thinners, you would have to avoid this, as it would interfere with your medication and make clotting more likely). It is also a terrific vegetable source of omega-3 fatty acids, over 130 mg. (a good reminder that one does not always have to eat fish to get healthy fats). It provides over 2 grams of dietary fiber, good for intestinal health and also the heart. This overall profile of antioxidants, healthy fats, and fiber make this a food which is highly anti-inflammatory, good for prevention of disease and cooling down the fires of inflammatory states in the body such as chronic pain. Very importantly, like its brassica cousins, kale is high in indole 3 carbinol (I3C), which seems to have a protective effect against the development of breast cancer. And one final bonus: nearly 100 mg of calcium, adding another bone healthy benefit to this versatile green.

So if you have not already made this good green a good friend, get to know kale this fall, and you will be glad you did.

Kale with onions and cider

This interesting combination of flavors pairs two fall season favorites: apple cider and cool weather greens. You may be surprised at the delicious result!

Remove hard stems and ribs from 1 pound of fresh kale. Sauté one large onion in a large heavy pot with 4 tbsp extra virgin olive oil. Add ¼ tsp of turmeric and ¼ tsp salt when onions are tender. Add the kale and ½ cup of apple cider, and cook, covered, with an occasional stir, until kale is tender, probably about 5 minutes. Do not overcook, as the kale may become bitter if overcooked. Experiment with different spices, and discover which flavor combinations suit you best. This will be a good recipe to play with over time.

To your health,

Robert Pendergrast, M.D.

www.realfoodsthatheal.com

P.S. Please remember to forward this bulletin to family members and friends who also deserve to know about food choices to promote health!

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