

Leafy Greens - How To Get More Into Your Diet

I wasn't always a big green vegetable eater. Mum always had to tell me "eat your greens"! But now I love them, and I think what helped me love them was the different and amazing ways I learnt to add greens to my diet. No more bland and boring steamed broccoli on the plate. I will share some of my tips with you but first, let's look at why greens are so important to incorporate into our diets, each and every day.

Leafy greens are an inexpensive, low calorie and highly nutritious foods which are so simple to add to every meal. They are low in fat, high in dietary fibre and rich in folic acid, vitamin C, potassium and magnesium. They are also full of phytochemicals and antioxidants, thought to lower the risk of cardiovascular disease and cancer. Green vegetables are also good sources of iron and calcium, great for vegetarians or those who eat little red meat and dairy.

Leafy greens can add an array of different colours and flavours to your dishes. From sweet to bitter, peppery to earthy, mild to strong. Here are some of my favourite ways to add greens to my diet:

- Bok choy – amazing in Asian style soups or stir fries.
- Cabbage – try shredded cabbage as a topper on cottage pies instead of (or as well as) potato (random but good). Have it in salads or some yummy homemade rice paper rolls. Or make your own cabbage slaw and add it to everything, sandwiches to fish tacos... DELISH!
- Broccoli – cut into florets and add to stir fries. Chop finely and throw in an omelette or a frittata. Try it in a pasta or make broccoli pesto. Also great blended in a soup. Or combine finely chopped broccoli, eggs, cheese and breadcrumbs and make broccoli and cheese balls, great for the kids!
- Spinach – such a versatile ingredient. Throw a big handful in smoothies or in a fry pan with mushrooms and garlic for breakfast. Add to curries, pastas, salads. Throw shredded spinach into meatballs or Bolognese sauces. My favourite way to eat spinach (but in moderation), as a homemade dip in a cob loaf.
- Kale – like spinach, kale is another one to throw into smoothies or juices. Delicious in salads, my favourite with roasted sweet potato and haloumi. Be sure to massage the kale with a touch of oil and lemon juice before adding to salad, to make it less bitter. Make kale chips in the oven with a little salt, another great one for the kids. Throw it in a stir fry or simply sauté with a little garlic, salt and pepper and add as a side to any dish.
- Lettuce – this one is easy and probably the most commonly eaten leafy green. An alternative to your usual salad would be things like san choy bow or ditch the bread in burgers and use lettuce leaves instead. Low carb, fresh and yummy.
- Brussel sprouts – this one's a little harder, not many people enjoy Brussel sprouts. Try adding them to the pan with your other roast veggies with garlic, salt and pepper or in a pot luck roast or stew. Try shredding it in a salad or soup with loads of other vegetables.
- Other yummy leafy greens include rocket, watercress, swiss chard, mustard greens and even herbs. Add them to salads for a flavour kick!

Leafy greens are nutritional powerhouses. They are a great way to add flavour without adding fat or sugar. The perfect addition to any meal. Try to have leafy greens every day. Add them everywhere you can to really reap the amazing benefits leafy greens have to offer.