

Everything you ever wanted to know about Kale, but were Afraid to Ask

by John Rizzo

Are you looking for an easy way to increase your vitamin, mineral, and fiber intake and maybe even discover something that tastes great at the same time? Well look no further; kale just might be your answer. There it sits, flaunting its pretty green curly leaves, as most of us walk past not giving it a second thought. You should give it plenty of thought.

Kale is available year round, but from mid winter until spring it's at its best. Eat it raw, or steam it; either way it's a nutritional wonder. With over 100% of the daily recommended allowance of vitamin K in a single serving, a vitamin needed for blood coagulation and good bone health, it will also give you your full daily allowance of vitamin C and Vitamin A. Toss in healthy doses of calcium, Vitamin B6, magnesium, potassium, iron, copper and phosphorus, and it becomes one of the most naturally nutrient rich foods available. Kale is also abundant in antioxidants, which are associated with cancer prevention, and can also help lower blood cholesterol. Now that's one healthy vegetable.

Kale comes in three varieties, curly, ornamental, and dinosaur; all of which are edible but vary in flavor and texture. Curly, probably the most often noticed in the grocery store, is deep green in color and is sharp in flavor. Ornamental comes in a variety of colors, including white, green and purple and is mild in flavor. Dinosaur has dark blue-green leaves and possesses a bumpy texture; it is slightly sweeter than the curly variety. When kale, and most other greens are cooked, they lose most of their sharpness and tend to take on the flavor of the other ingredients in the recipe. If you are looking for ways to incorporate kale into your diet, it can be pretty much substituted for any recipe that calls for spinach, such as soups, pizza, omelets, and stews or just lightly steamed then sautéed with onions and garlic in olive oil.

When purchasing kale, look for small, rich colored leaves with firm stems. Store your kale in a sealed baggie in the refrigerator; depending upon its freshness, it should keep up to a week.

Italian Pasta, Beans and Kale

Yield 8

Cavatappi Pasta	1 lb.	Zucchini, Cubed	2 Cups
Olive Oil	2 TBL	Kale	1 lb.
Onion, Sliced	1 Cup	Black Pepper	1 tsp.
Garlic, Minced	1.5 TBL	Salt	1 TBL
Oregano	1 TBL	Sugar	1/4 Cup
Bell Pepper, Diced	3/4 Cup	Asiago Cheese	
Crushed Tomatoes	2 (28 oz.) cans	Cannelloni Beans	2 (15.5 oz.) cans

Heat the olive oil in a large saucepan (at least 5 quarts) and sauté the onions, garlic, and oregano until soft. Meanwhile, wash the kale and cut into 1 inch pieces, discarding the heavy part of the stem. Add it to the onion mixture and cook the kale until it wilts down to about 1/3 of the original volume; add about 1/2 cup of water and let the kale steam for an additional 5 minutes.

Add the tomatoes, bell pepper, black pepper and salt; let mixture simmer for about 1/2 hour. Add the beans and zucchini and cook for an additional twenty minutes or so or until the zucchini softens. Add enough sugar to cut the tartness of the tomatoes; adjust seasonings and remove from heat.

Cook the pasta and serve it under the tomato and bean mixture. Top with grated asiago or parmesan cheese. If preparing ahead, cool the pasta under cool water and store it in a sealed bag in the refrigerator.