

# NUTRITION TO NOURISH



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## Spring to Planting those Healthy Veggies

Spring has sprung (although it may not feel like it every day, but it actually did start on March 20<sup>th</sup>), and it's a great time to consider a container garden to grow fresh vegetables. Even if you don't grow an outdoor garden, container gardening can provide you with fresh produce, be easier to maintain, and brighten up an outdoor living space or an indoor windowsill.

Here are some quick tips to get started from Virginia Cooperative Extension:

- Container Corner
  - \* Look for containers large enough to support plants when full grown, hold soil without spilling, have adequate drainage, and have never held products that would be toxic to plants or people.
- Soil Selection
  - \* Look for a fairly lightweight potting mix. It should be porous to support the flow of air and water through the soil. There are a variety of packaged potting soil available at local garden centers that are appropriate.
- Planting Procedure
  - \* Plant in outdoor containers at the same time you would plant outdoor gardens.
  - \* Fill clean container to within one to two inches of the top with slightly damp soil, and sow the seeds or set the transplants according to the package instructions.
  - \* After planting, gently soak with water without displacing seeds. Label tags with plant name and date planted.
  - \* Thin seedlings (see thinning recommendations on seed package) when the seedlings have two or three leaves.

- Well-Timed Watering
  - \* Check soil as you may need to water daily depending on plant, size of pot, amount of sunlight, and temperature. Apply water until it runs through the drainage holes.
- Fertilizer Feedings
  - \* If you use a soil mix with fertilizer added, your plants will have enough nutrients for eight to ten weeks. If your plants grow longer than this, add a water-soluble fertilizer at the recommended rate on the fertilizer package. More is not better!
- Seed Selection (or purchase transplants from a local greenhouse)
  - \* Look for small-fruited tomatoes and peppers to try.
  - \* Lettuce, radishes, carrots, and many herbs (e.g., chives, parsley, cilantro, basil, or thyme) are good to add to your meals through the spring and summer.

For more information about getting started, get the full publication at <https://www.pubs.ext.vt.edu/426/426-336/426-336.html>.

Happy and Healthy Eating,

*Mary Beth*



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### Special points of interest:

- Lettuce—learn about the most nutrient dense options and ideas to use them in your cooking!

## Produce Item of the Month: Lettuce

Lettuce will be one of among one of the first vegetables available in Farmer's Markets or planted during the spring season. It is a great option because it is low in calories, fat, and sodium while being a good source of fiber, iron, folate, and vitamin C. Depending on the variety, it can also contain phytochemicals (beneficial natural occurring chemicals in plants) shown to help reduce chronic inflammation, lower cholesterol, and reduce the risk of developing diabetes.



When selecting lettuce from a Farmer's Market or grocery store or deciding which variety to plant for yourself; keep two factors in mind. These are color and arrangement of the leaves. Fruit and vegetable colors are determined by the phytonutrients they contain, and some colors are more beneficial than others when it comes to lettuce. The arrangement of leaves also plays a role in phytochemical content because leaves that are exposed to direct sunlight develop higher levels of phytonutrients. Following these guidelines for lettuce selection will help you power up your health.



- ◆ Look for lettuces with red, purple or reddish brown colors – they contain anthocyanins, known to reduce cancer risk, lower blood pressure, and slow age-related memory loss.
- ◆ Look for green lettuces with a dark green color – they contain lutein, known to protect eye health and decrease chronic inflammation.
- ◆ Choose loose-leaf lettuce varieties with open leaves (e.g., red looseleaf lettuce has been shown to be highest in phytonutrient content with dark green looseleaf lettuce next, followed by red or dark green Bibb and Romaine lettuces)
- ◆ Adding other greens outside the lettuce family to salads can spice up the flavor and the phytochemical content of your salads. Try adding arugula, radicchio, and/or spinach to your next salad creation.



1. Kim JM, Moon Y, Tou JC, Mou B, Waterland NL. Nutritional value, bioactive compounds and health benefits of lettuce (*Lactuca sativa* L.); *Journal of Food Composition and Analysis: Volume 49, 2016, Pages 19-34, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jfca.2016.03.004>. Accessed at <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0889157516300230>*

### Ask the RD

**Question:** I am lactose intolerant and cannot consume milk anymore. What are my best options for a dairy alternative?

**Answer:** When looking for a dairy alternative, it's good to start by looking at the nutrients from milk that you'll want to ensure an alternative would provide. These include protein, calcium, and Vitamin D. Additional benefits of milk include no added sugar and a low fat and low calorie content if you choose skim or low-fat options. This will allow you to keep your beverage choices in line with the American Institute for Cancer Research's recommendations for being a healthy body

weight and limiting consumption of beverages with added sugars as ways to put their guidelines for reduction of cancer risk into practice. Avoiding the fat and sugar from flavored milk or milk alternatives provides the benefit of preventing being overweight or obese, both of which have been shown to increase the risk of twelve cancers. There are plenty of dairy alternatives from which to choose made from soy, almonds, oat, flax, rice, coconut, or pea protein powder. When looking for the ones that provide protein and are fortified with calcium and vitamin D while lacking added sugars, unsweetened soy milk and

Ripple plant-based milk are at the top of the list. See the table for full details from different types of milk; and if you have to eliminate milk, look for appropriate alternatives to fuel your body.

1. <https://www.aicr.org/resources/media-library/putting-aicrs-cancer-prevention-recommendations-into-action/>
2. <https://www.aicr.org/resources/media-library/what-you-need-to-know-about-obesity-and-cancer/>



### Nutrient Comparison in Milk and Dairy Alternatives

(all based on 1 cup serving size)

Brand	Calcium (mg)	Calories	Protein (grams)	Fat (grams)	Carbohydrates (grams)	Added Sugar (grams)
Cow's milk (skim)	325	83	8	0	12	0
Silk Unswt Soy Milk	300	80	7	4.5	4	0
Silk Original Soy Milk	450	110	8	4.5	9	5
Almond Breeze (AB) Original Almond Milk	450	60	1	2.5	8	7
AB Unswt Vanilla Almond Milk	450	30	1	2.5	1	0
AB Reduced Sugar Vanilla Almond Milk	450	60	1	2.5	8	7
Chobani Oat Milk	130	110	2	5	13	7
Chobani Zero Sugar Original Oat Milk	130	90	1	5	9	0
SO Delicious Unswt Organic Coconut Milk	130	45	0	4.5	1	0
SO Delicious Organic Original Coconut Milk	130	70	0	4.5	9	7
Ripple Unswt Original Plant-Based Milk	440	80	8	4.5	<1	0
Ripple Original Plant-Based Milk	440	100	8	4.5	6	6



**Friendly Reminder for Added Sugar Limits:** Aim to consume less than 24 grams (6 tsp.) of added sugar daily for females and less than 36 grams (9 tsp.) daily for males.

## Arugula and Red Leaf Lettuce Salad

From: Twin Springs Fruit Farm website at  
<https://www.twinspringsfruitfarm.com/post/arugula-and-red-leaf-lettuce-salad>

### Ingredients

- ½ lb. Arugula
- ½ lb. red-leaf Lettuce, Buttercrunch or Oakleaf
- 1 Tbs. dijon mustard
- 1 Tbs. red wine vinegar
- 1 tsp. finely chopped garlic,
- Salt, and freshly ground black pepper, to taste
- ⅛ tsp. ground cumin\*
- 4 Tbs. extra virgin olive oil
- 4 Tbs. finely chopped parsley or chervil



\*When possible I always buy "whole" herbs and spices, in this case the cumin, and briefly toast them in a little pan, after which they can be ground; I use an old electric coffee grinder.

### Instructions

1. Pick over the arugula and lettuce, and wash in cold water. Rinse and pat dry, or spin in a salad spinner.
2. In a salad bowl, put the mustard, vinegar, garlic, salt, pepper and cumin. Beat gradually with a whisk while adding the oil. Add the lettuce and arugula, and toss well to blend. Parsley or chervil may be sprinkled on top.



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## QUICK BRAISED LETTUCE & PEAS

FROM BBC GOODFOOD WEBSITE AT  
[HTTPS://WWW.BBCGOODFOOD.COM/RECIPES/QUICK-BRAISED-LETTUCE-PEAS/](https://www.bbcgoodfood.com/recipes/quick-braised-lettuce-peas/)

Serves:6

Prep: 15 minutes

Cook: 15 minutes

Easy!!

### Ingredients:

- 16 halved pearl onions
- 2 cups frozen peas
- 2 Tbsp. olive oil
- 3 Baby Gem lettuces, finely shredded

### Instructions:

1. Cook the pearl onions for 5 minutes and the peas for 2 minutes in separate pans of boiling water until the onions are soft and the peas are just cooked.
2. Heat the olive oil in a frying pan, brown the onions, then add the peas and shredded Baby Gem lettuce. Cook just to heat through the lettuce, then season and serve.

Enjoy this recipe that contains benefits from the lettuce as well as fiber from the peas and onion and additional cancer-protective phytochemicals from the onions.

