



Media Script

KENTUCKY LETTUCE

CONTACT INFORMATION:

Fresh Kentucky salad greens are delightful harbingers of the fall garden season! You can choose to grow your own in a patio container or backyard garden, or purchase from your favorite farmers market vendor. Salad greens make a delicious, refreshing and nutritious addition to for family meals.

Lettuces started as weeds in the Mediterranean basin, and have been served for more than 4500 years. Varieties have been documented in Egyptian tomb paintings and identified by various Greek scholars. Christopher Columbus introduced lettuce to the new world.

Bibb lettuce was developed by Major John Bibb in the backyard of his Frankfort, Ky. home — Grey Gables (Bibb-Burnley House). He moved to Frankfort in 1856 and shared his seeds and plants with friends. Soon it became known as Bibb lettuce and became commercially produced in 1935.

Popular leaf lettuce varieties include: arugula, characterized by small, flat leaves with long stems, similar to dandelion leaves, with a peppery taste; loose leaf with curly leaves joined at the stem, including oak leaf, red leaf and green leaf; chicory or curly endive with dark, outer leaves and paler (or yellow) leaves toward the center and a ragged edge on long thin stems with a slightly bitter taste; and escarole, a milder chicory family member with broad wavy leaves. Romaine lettuce has a loaf-like shape with darker outer leaves, a strong taste and crispy texture, similar to iceberg lettuce.

Select the darkest green salad lettuce for the highest nutritive value. Fresh salad greens provide a versatile foundation for any seasonal salad with only 10 calories per cup and approximately 70 percent of vitamin A needed each day.

Select fresh, crisp lettuce leaves with no signs of wilting, slime or dark spots on edges. Leaves with roots

should be placed in a glass of water with a plastic bag placed over the leaves and placed in the refrigerator crisper. Check greens bought in bunches for insects.

Avoid storing greens near fruits that produce ethylene gases (like apples), as this will increase brown spots on leaves and cause spoilage.

Buy leaf lettuces in smaller quantities as they are highly perishable in contrast to romaine, which may last ten days. Store all lettuces in plastic bags in the refrigerator crisper section.

Spinach varieties include: flat or smooth Leaf, which has unwrinkled, spade-shape leaves with a mild taste; savoy, which has crinkly, dark green curly leaves, often sold in fresh bunches; and semi-savoy with slightly curly leaves and a similar texture to savoy, but easier to clean.

Fresh spinach is one of the most popular raw salad greens. Its dark green color indicates a highly nutritious, low calorie source of vitamins A and C. One cup raw spinach has about 10 calories and approximately 60 percent of the recommended daily allowance for vitamin A.

Fresh spinach can be purchased loose or in ready-to-eat packages. For best quality, select crisp, green leaves with a fresh fragrance. Avoid limp, damaged or spotted leaves. Wash and pat dry to remove moisture. Pack loosely in a plastic bag. Stored in the refrigerator crisper drawer, it should last 3 to 4 days.

Lettuce is an important cool-season vegetable crop. It tolerates light frost, but intense sunlight and high summer temperatures can cause seed stalk formation and bitter flavors. Lettuce does well in hotbeds during the winter months and in cold frames in the spring and late fall.

For more information on growing lettuce, see the Cooperative Extension Service publication, Home Vegetable Gardening in Kentucky, ID-128. 2011.)

Fall Harvest Salad

5 cups torn leaf lettuce
2 ½ cups spinach leaves
1 medium red apple, chopped
1 medium pear, chopped
4 teaspoons lemon juice
¼ cup dried cranberries
¼ cup feta cheese crumbles

½ cup chopped walnuts
Dressing:
2 ½ tablespoons olive oil
2 tablespoons balsamic vinegar
1 ½ teaspoons Dijon mustard
2 teaspoons Kentucky honey
½ teaspoon salt

Combine leaf lettuce and spinach leaves in a large salad bowl. **Mix** apples and pears with lemon juice in a small bowl and add to lettuce mixture. **Prepare** dressing by whisking together the olive oil, balsamic vinegar, Dijon mustard, honey and salt; **pour** over lettuce mixture and **toss** to coat. **Sprinkle** salad with cranberries, feta cheese and walnuts. **Serve** immediately.

Yield: 8, 1 cup servings
Nutritional Analysis: 130 calories, 9 g fat, 1.5 g sat fat, 240 mg sodium, 12 g carbohydrates, 3 g fiber, 7 g sugar, 3 g protein.

Source:

• www.fruitsandveggiesmatter.org
• ID-128, Home Vegetable Gardening in Kentucky. Cooperative Extension Service. University of Kentucky, College of Agriculture, Food and Environment. 2011.

For more delicious recipes and information using “Kentucky Proud” fruits and vegetables, contact your local Cooperative Extension Service or visit: www.kentuckyproud.com.

-30-

September 2014

Plate it up! Kentucky Proud Project

County Extension Agents for Family and Consumer Sciences
University of Kentucky, Dietetics and Human Nutrition students