



Growing with MO

Harvest of the Season

A Missouri Farm to Preschool Newsletter

October

Spinach



Did You Know?

Popeye the Sailor Man was a cartoon character who got his strength from eating spinach. He became so popular in the 1930's that people started eating more spinach.



Read Together

Sylvia's Spinach by Katherine Pryor

The Vegetables We Eat by Gail Gibbons



Cooler Days!

October is a great month to enjoy Missouri! The trees are beautiful, the weather is cooler and there are many fall festivals and other outdoor activities for families to enjoy together. Many plants enjoy cool temperatures too and spinach is one of them. We usually think about growing spinach in the spring, but it does well in the fall and can even survive into the winter if the plants are protected from wind and extreme temperatures. It only takes 4-6 weeks from planting to harvest. Just keep the soil moist by watering often.



Cook Together

Spinach Salad with Eggs

6 cups fresh spinach, washed and dried
3 large eggs
 $\frac{1}{2}$ cup dried cranberries
 $\frac{3}{8}$ cup Parmesan cheese, grated
 $\frac{1}{4}$ cup canola oil
1 Tablespoon vinegar (any type)
1 Tablespoon honey
 $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon salt



1. Tear spinach into bite sized pieces.
2. Place eggs in saucepan and cover with cold water by one inch. Bring just to a boil. Cover pan and remove from heat right away. Let sit 15 minutes. Remove eggs and plunge into cold water to cool. This makes eggs easier to peel.
3. Peel and slice hard boiled eggs.
4. Chop egg slices with plastic knife and add to spinach.
5. Sprinkle grated cheese over the salad.
6. Measure and add cranberries.
7. Measure oil, vinegar, honey and salt. Put in a jar with a tight fitting lid and shake well.
8. Just before serving, drizzle dressing over salad and toss.

Let children help with steps marked with the little helping hand!

Recipe from Cooking Matters

Exploring Leaves

When we think about leaves in October, we are usually thinking about the beautiful fall color of leaves on the trees. But many of the vegetables we eat are also leaves.

Leaf rubbing activity: Give your child one spinach leaf and one leaf that has fallen from a tree outside. Fold two pieces of plain white paper and have your child put each leaf inside one of the folded papers with the back side of the leaf facing up. Gently rub a crayon or colored pencil on top of the paper covering each leaf. Watch the details of the leaves appear. Ask your child what looks the same in each leaf rubbing. What looks different? Notice that each rubbing shows a stem and veins. These carry water and energy through plants to feed and keep them healthy.



Why do we eat some leaves and not others?

This could be a question from a curious 3 year old.

We eat some plant leaves as vegetables because they are tender and easy to eat. They also taste good and have lots of nutrients to make us healthy. Most leaves from trees are tough and you would have to chew them a lot and they probably wouldn't taste good.

From the Field

Stories from Missouri Child Care

Staff visited several child care centers to talk to preschoolers about the fruits and vegetables they like and don't like. When children looked at a picture of spinach, they often said *"That's a leaf. You don't eat leaves!"*

It's good to remember that kids may see the world differently and have reasons for refusing foods that make perfect sense in their minds.

Shop Together

If you're going for convenience, look for the bags of pre-washed baby spinach. It is tender and easy to use straight out of the bag. There's no need to wash or remove the stems.

Spinach should be dark green in color. Don't buy it if it's yellowed or wilted. Keep spinach in an air tight container in the refrigerator up to five days.

In the store, ask your child to help find other leafy green vegetables like kale, mustard greens, swiss chard and collard greens.

Look through this newsletter for some of the green leaves that we eat.

Tips for Using Spinach

- Try raw spinach leaves instead of lettuce on a sandwich or in a wrap.
- Add chopped spinach to mixed dishes like casseroles, stews and meatloaf.
- Toss some spinach with your lettuce in a salad for a boost of good nutrition.
- Spinach cooks very quickly. Avoid overcooking to preserve the nutrients and flavor.
- When cooking fresh spinach, know that 10-12 cups of raw spinach shrinks to 1 cup of cooked!

Growing with MO Harvest of the Season is a project of the Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services Team Nutrition Program. Young children learn about Missouri grown fruits and vegetables through preschool classroom experiences, gardening, field trips and through eating these foods in meals and snacks when they are in season. www.health.mo.gov/growingwithmo



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