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Your child learned about...



the green leafy vegetable (Vitamin A rich) called baby spinach

today with a guest speaker from the Seneca County Cornell Cooperative Extension and 4-H Youth Development Program.

Your child participated in the following learning task which they will enjoy telling you about:

How to Enjoy the Crisp Flavor of Baby Spinach with the Help of an Adult

1. Wash your hand with warm, soapy, running water before preparing food.
2. With the help of an adult wash the fresh baby spinach with cool water. Pat dry with a clean paper towel to remove excess moisture.
3. Have an adult help you place the baby spinach on a plate or bowl. If you would like drizzle a little low fat ranch dressing over the spinach leaves to make a salad. Eat your salad with the help of a fork. Baby spinach is so sweet you can enjoy each savory leaf without any dressing as a great finger food snack.
4. Enjoy!!!



BACKGROUND INFORMATION ON SPINACH

Spinach is a dark green leafy vegetable whose leaves can be eaten raw or cooked. Spinach was cultivated over 2,000 years ago in Iran. Cultivation of spinach began during the Greek and Roman civilizations. Our name for spinach is derived from the Persian word "ispanai" which means "green hand" which later became "spanachia" (Late Latin), to spinach and spinage (English). The Arabs named it "the prince of vegetables". In 647 A.D. spinach was introduced into China and was then transported to Spain in 1100. The prickly seeded form was known in Germany in the 13th century and the smooth seeded form was not described until 1552. It is the smooth seeded form that is used today in commercial production. By 1806, spinach had become a popular vegetable and was listed in American seed catalogs. In the 1920's the U.S. pushed spinach commercially, with Popeye the Sailor man cartoon being a great advocate in spinach consumption.



TYPES OF SPINACH

There are three types of spinach available in U.S. supermarkets: savoy (curly leaf), flat (smooth leaf) and semi-savoy (slightly curly leaves). The savoy has dark green crinkly leaves while the flat variety matches its name. The spade-shaped leaves are flat leaves and have a milder taste than the savoy. The semi-savoy leaves are slightly curly. Baby spinach comes from the smallest leaves of flat leaf spinach plants.

HOW DOES SPINACH GROW?

Spinach is an annual plant that grows best in cool, damp weather and rich, moist soil. Spinach plants can be started with seed and can be harvested 6 to 8 weeks later or when the largest leaves are 6 to 8 inches long.

WHERE DOES SPINACH GROW?

Spinach is grown across the US from California to Florida. California is responsible for over one half of the production in the US. Texas is also a large producer of spinach, about one third of the total crop in the US. Colorado, Florida and New Jersey also have significant acreage.

RECOMMENDED WAYS TO EAT SPINACH

Fresh spinach is a great way to start a healthful salad. Just add other colorful vegetables or fruits, a few nuts or seeds and your favorite dressing. Fresh spinach also makes a great addition to sandwiches. Large leaves add a delicious crunch while baby spinach leaves add beautiful color. Steamed or stir-fried spinach makes a great side dish. Try adding some garlic for greater flavor. For a super nutrient boost, add chopped spinach to spaghetti sauce or soup. The next time you're at the supermarket, look for spinach. You can buy fresh bagged spinach that is already washed and ready to eat, or you can buy frozen chopped spinach, which is convenient if you want to add it to serve it cooked or add it to sauces or soups.

NUTRIENTS IN SPINACH

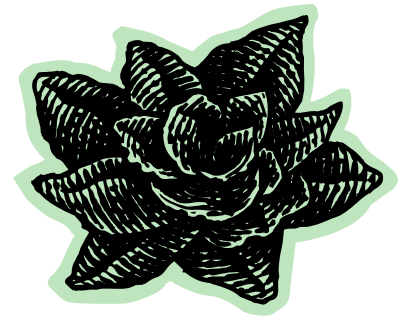
Do you know that spinach is a super vegetable that's packed with important nutrients? That's right! Spinach is an excellent source of vitamins A, C and fiber. But spinach contains more than just powerful vitamins...it has phytochemicals, too! Phytochemicals (pronounced "fight-o-chemicals") are substances produced by plants to help protect themselves from insects and other pests. The good news is these beneficial substances not only protect plants, they also protect humans. In fact, phytochemicals help fight to protect your health.

One way that you can tell if a fruit or vegetable has phytochemicals is by its color: red, orange, yellow, green, blue, and purple...all the colors of the rainbow! And each color has its own phytochemical. For example, dark green vegetables like spinach contain a phytochemical called lutein (loo-teen). Lutein helps keep your eyes healthy! So, when you think about healthy eyes, think about eating dark green vegetables like spinach!

YUMMY SPINACH DIP

Ingredients:

- 1 (10 ounce) package of frozen chopped spinach, thawed
- 1 cup mild white onion, finely chopped
- 2 cloves garlic, finely chopped
- 1 cup raw red pepper, finely chopped
- 1 cup low-fat sour cream
- 1 cup low-fat mayonnaise
- ½ teaspoon salt and pepper (optional)
- 5 cups assorted colorful raw vegetables for dipping



Directions:

Squeeze the water out of the spinach, and place the spinach into a mixing bowl. Stir in

the onion, garlic, vegetables, sour cream, and mayonnaise. Season with salt and pepper (optional). Let the dip sit overnight in the refrigerator for the flavors to mix, and stir again before serving. This dip keeps well in the refrigerator, covered, for up to 1 week.

This fact sheet is provided courtesy of Dole Food Company's Nutrition & Health Program.

THE SPINACH DIP WORD SCRAMBLE

Which vegetables would you dip in spinach dip? Try to unscramble the letters in the silly words below. Remember they are all names of colorful vegetables that go great with spinach dip. The solutions are at the bottom of this page.

1. ROASCTR
2. SLEBLPREPPE
3. ILAUCWRELOF
4. YELREC
5. CILBORC
6. CATOYHSREMRT
7. UBMCCREU
8. DSERHAIS

Little Brown Seeds

Author: Unknown

Little brown seeds so small and round
Are you sleeping quietly underground?

Down came the raindrops
Sprinkle, sprinkle, sprinkle

Out comes the rainbow
Twinkle, twinkle, twinkle.

Little brown seeds way down below

Up through the earth they
Grow, grow, grow.

Little leaves come one by one.

They hold up their heads
And look at the sun.

Answers to WORD SCRAMBLE : 1)carrots 2) bell peppers 3) cauliflower 4) celery
5) broccoli 6) cherry tomato 7) cucumber 8) radishes