

Herbs That Play Well with Spinach

by Pamela Fay

Rich in antioxidants, vitamins and minerals such as potassium and iron, spinach is a healthy addition to any diet. Raw, frozen or lightly steamed, it retains its nutritional value. Spinach is a flavorful vegetable frequently served as a side dish sauteed with garlic. However, spinach is versatile enough to be included in all types of recipes with added herbs to complement its mild and tangy flavor.

Basil

Basil is a fragrant herb that is high in vitamin A, magnesium, iron and calcium. With its large, dark green leaves, basil is best when fresh. However, you can use it dried in many recipes with good results. It typically appears in dishes such as pasta and pesto. In addition to basil, pesto is traditionally made with pine nuts, parmesan cheese and olive oil. Spinach, however, is a nutritious substitute for some of the basil in pesto. Combine two parts basil and one part fresh spinach in your favorite pesto recipe. Walnuts complement the taste of spinach, as well, and can be substituted for pine nuts.

Chives

Spinach goes well with chives. Chives resemble long blades of grass, but are related to onions, leeks and garlic. Chives have a mild onion flavor. However, you can also buy or grow chives that taste like garlic. Rich in vitamins A and C, chives protect against 38 strains of salmonella. Both chives and spinach add flavor and texture to scrambled eggs. Add the other ingredients typically included in scramble eggs, such as milk and cheese. Although chives are usually snipped and added to dishes just prior to serving, for spinach and chives scrambled eggs, whisk all ingredients together and cook your eggs on low.

Dill

Fresh dill grows in wispy leaves and has a sweet, soft taste. Dill seeds are also used in cooking, but the seeds are stronger in flavor. Dill has properties that protect the body from carcinogens such as cigarette and charcoal grill smoke. Add dill to frozen spinach (thawed), dry onion soup mix, mayonnaise and sour cream to make a party dip. Serve in a bread bowl garnished with additional dill sprigs.

Thyme

Thyme is a delicate herb with small, curled leaves. The herb has traditionally been used in medicines that treat respiratory ailments. Although fresh thyme leaves yield best flavor, for soups and stews, dried thyme works fine. If you select fresh thyme, tie the sprigs together for cooking and remove prior to serving. Spinach and thyme are flavorful additions to canned lentil soup. Or, if you prefer, make a simple lentil soup from scratch by simmering lentils, chopped carrots and onions, salsa, salt and ground thyme to taste. Prior to serving, toss in a few generous handfuls of spinach. Cook until the spinach wilts.

References

RuralTech Services; Health Benefits of Spinach

<http://www.organicfacts.net/health-benefits/vegetable/health-benefits-of-spinach.html>

The George Mateljan Foundation; Basil

<http://www.whfoods.com/genpage.php?tname=foodspice&dbid=85>

Stamford Hospital; Health Benefits May Result from Simple Foods; June 2006

<http://www.stamfordhospital.org/health-information/health-library/content.aspx?pageid=P08561>

The George Mateljan Foundation; Dill

<http://www.whfoods.com/genpage.php?tname=foodspice&dbid=71>

The George Mateljan Foundation; Thyme

<http://www.whfoods.com/genpage.php?tname=foodspice&dbid=77>