

Health Benefits of Swiss Chard



Swiss chard is a member of the beet family, which accounts for its red stems and veins. Like beets, it is helpful in lowering blood pressure and improving blood flow. Chard is rich in vitamins, minerals and phytonutrients like antioxidants that fight disease and aging.

WHAT MAKES SWISS CHARD GREAT?

Nutrition

1 cup raw Swiss chard has 7 calories, 2g protein, 1g fiber, no fat, and no cholesterol.

1 cup cooked Swiss chard has 35 calories, 3.5 g protein and 4 gm fiber.

Vitamins

Like other greens, Swiss chard contains several antioxidants including beta-carotene and vitamins C and K. Vitamin K helps make proteins required for blood clotting and the building of bone while lutein and zeaxanthin maintain eye health. Chard also contains B vitamins thiamin, riboflavin, niacin, B6 and pantothenic acid for energy production and healthy skin.

Note: Vitamin K consumption can interfere with the effectiveness of blood-thinning medications. Those prescribed these medications can still enjoy Swiss chard. The goal is to maintain a steady intake of greens so your provider can make adjustments to the medication.

Minerals

Swiss chard contains calcium and magnesium which work with vitamin K to maintain bone health and reduce risk of fractures. Chard also contains phosphorus, zinc and selenium (antioxidant).

Fiber

Although minimal, the fiber in Swiss chard can help reduce constipation, hemorrhoids, and aid in weight control. Cooked Swiss chard shrinks greatly in size, making it easier to consume larger quantities and increase fiber intake.

Phytonutrients (plant compounds)

The high level of nitrates in Swiss chard provides compounds

for the body's production of nitric oxide (NO), a gas produced in the blood vessels and other organs responsible for widening arteries and lowering blood pressure. NO can also improve blood flow, lower cholesterol and prevent the build-up of artery-clogging plaque.

Nitric oxide has also been shown to improve oxygen transport in muscles during exercise, resulting in longer endurance and improved athletic performance.

Chlorophyll in Swiss chard may help to block carcinogens created when cooking meats at high temperatures like grilling or frying. Kaempferol is anti-inflammatory and may also prevent cancer cell formation.

Alpha-lipoic acid in Swiss chard has been shown to assist in lowering blood sugars and improving insulin sensitivity.

BUYING & USING SWISS CHARD

Seek out Swiss chard with firm, dark leaves. Stems can range from deep red to orange and yellow. Both leaves and stems are equally edible and nutritious. Store unwashed in the refrigerator until ready for use. Rinse well and shake off excess water.

Mature chard can have a slightly bitter taste. Adding lemon juice to raw or cooked chard can remove bitterness. Use Swiss chard like other greens by adding to salad mix, on sandwiches or in smoothies. Wilt into hot soup or toss into stir fried veggies. Try using Swiss chard in place of basil when making pesto or pickle stems for a crunchy snack.



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Swiss Chard with Cannellini Beans

Adapted from mayihavethatrecipe.com

Ingredients:

- 1 large bunch Swiss chard, rinsed
- 1 Tbsp olive oil
- 5 cloves garlic, minced
- 1/2 tsp salt and 1/4 tsp pepper
- 1 15-oz can cannellini beans, rinsed, drained
- 2 Tbsp lemon juice, red wine vinegar or apple cider vinegar
- 1/2 tsp red pepper flakes (optional)

Directions:

1. Remove stems of chard by sliding from the base of the stem to the top. Tear greens. Chop stems into small pieces. Keep separated.
2. Heat oil in large pan over medium heat. Add garlic and cook until fragrant, 1-2 minutes.
3. Add Swiss chard stems and cook 2-3 minutes, stirring frequently.
4. Add leaves and toss until wilted, stirring to make sure they do not burn.
5. Add beans and lemon juice or vinegar. Mix and cook 3-5 minutes.
6. Season with pepper flakes, salt and pepper.
7. Serve as a side dish or mix with quinoa or buckwheat for added protein.

Stuffed Swiss Chard Rolls

Adapted from thesaltandsweet.com

Ingredients:

- 1 large bunch Swiss chard, rinsed, stems removed
- 1 cup wild rice, uncooked
- 3 cup parsley, chopped
- 3 ripe tomatoes, diced
- 1 small onion, finely chopped
- 1/2 cup fresh mint, chopped
- 1 1/2 tsp salt
- Juice of 1 lemon
- 2 Tbsp olive oil
- 1 large potato, peeled, sliced in circles (optional)

Directions:

1. Filling: In a large bowl, mix parsley, mint, tomatoes, onions, rice, salt, ,lemon juice and oil.
2. Cut Swiss chard leaves in half lengthwise. Cut stems into bite-sized pieces.
3. Bring a pot of water to boil and blanch Swiss chard 2 minutes. Drain and spread on tray. Retain water.
4. Using a non-stick pan, spread cut potatoes on the bottom of pan in single layer. Add stems around potatoes.
5. Add 1-2 Tbsp filling to each Swiss chard leaf and roll leaf into cylinder shape.
6. Place each filled roll on top of potato layer. Form several layers as necessary.
7. Pour any remaining juice from mixture and top with water from blanching method until rolls are nearly covered.
8. Cover tightly and cook on medium heat until boiling. Then reduce heat and simmer 20 minutes or until rice is cooked.
9. Allow to cool 30 minutes before serving. Add slices of fresh lemon. Can be served hot, warm or cold.

Mediterranean Chard Salad

Adapted from feastingathome.com

Ingredients:

- 4-6 cups young chard, in small pieces
- 1 red pepper, thinly sliced
- 4 radishes, slices (or carrots or beets)
- 6 cherry tomatoes, cut in half
- 1 avocado sliced
- 1 cup canned chickpeas, drained
- 1 cup Italian parsley, chopped (or cilantro)
- 1/4 slivered almonds or pumpkin seeds, toasted
- 1/4 cup kalamata olives (optional)

Directions:

1. Place all salad ingredients in large bowl.
2. Whisk together dressing ingredients and drizzle over salad. Toss.
3. Sprinkle with salt and pepper. Add additional lemon juice if desired.

Dressing:

- 2 Tbsp fresh lemon juice
- 1 tsp lemon zest
- 1/2 cloves garlic, grated
- 1 tsp honey
- 1/3 cup olive oil
- Salt and pepper to taste

REFERENCES

Fdc.nal.usda.gov

https://ods.od.nih.gov/factsheets/vitamin_k, calcium, magnesium,

Nitric oxide: <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4488823/>