

Dandelion Greens

INDIGENOUS HARVEST OF THE MONTH

Eat More Alaska Dandelion Greens

Dandelions are the first fresh greens many of us see in springtime all over Alaska. Dandelions are a non-native plant in Alaska and yet they thrive in areas throughout the state on roadways, paths, trails, and in yards and gardens in more urban areas. Cultures around the world have used every part of the dandelion as both nutritious food and powerful medicine.

Why Eat More Dandelion Greens?

Nutrition Facts

Serving Size 1 cup, chopped (55 g)

Amount Per Serving

Calories 25

% Daily Value

Total Fat 0.4g 0%

Saturated Fat 0.1g 0%

Sodium 42mg 1%

Total Carbohydrate 5g 1%

Dietary Fiber 1.9g 7%

Sugar 0.4g

Protein 1.5g 3%

Vitamin A 111% Vitamin C 32%

Calcium 10% Iron 9%

A one-cup serving of dandelion greens provides:

- An excellent source of vitamin A.
- A great source of dietary fiber.
- A great source for vitamin C and calcium.
- A heart friendly, fat-free food.
- It is very low in sodium.
- A low calorie food.

Dandelion greens are eaten as a vegetable, similar to spinach or other bitter salad greens.

How Were Dandelion Greens Used Traditionally?

Dandelions may be better known as a weed to be stomped or sprayed out, but they've actually been used medicinally for centuries. The first reference of dandelions being used as a medicine was written back in the 10th and 11th centuries by Middle Eastern cultures. In Wales in the 13th century, many people were using the roots and leaves to treat a variety of ailments. Traditional cultures have used dandelion greens to support digestive and hormone health, lactation, and to help cure problems like urinary tract infections.

Dandelion has been recommended as a general liver and kidney stimulant. Since liver and kidney disorders manifest themselves in numerous ways, the dandelion root juice and extracts have been popular as a general tonic over the entire world. The plant's slightly bitter taste seems medicinal to many people.

How to Choose, Store and Prepare Dandelion Greens

Choose: CHOOSE A SPOT THAT HASN'T BEEN SPRAYED!! Dig the whole plant from the earth with a shovel or dandelion fork. Knock the extra dirt from the roots, cut off the greens, and carefully keep the greens and edible buds dirt-free. Clean with cold water.

Store: Once rinsed in cold water and cleaned of any debris, dandelion greens will last for only a few days in your refrigerator; if you can, simply only harvest what you and your family can eat. You can blanch and freeze dandelion greens like spinach.

Prepare: To prepare dandelion greens for freezing, start with blanching (30 seconds in boiling water then rinse with cold water). Then place blanched and drained greens in plastic freezer bags, squeeze excess air out and freeze.

Harvesting Dandelion Greens

Harvest them young and clean them well. **Choose a spot that hasn't been sprayed or fertilized with chemicals or frequented by pets.** Angle your "weeding fork" down about an inch into the soil below the greens, and sever the crown where it joins the root. Then pull the entire rosette from the ground. Shake it free of dirt and remove as many of last year's slimy leaves as possible.

Dandelion Greens Simple Salad

- 1 bunch - dandelion greens, washed, drained, trimmed
- 3 - green onions (white and green parts)
- Fresh dill or 2 tsp - dried dill
- 1/4 cup - extra virgin olive oil
- Juice of 1/2 lemon
- Black pepper and salt, to taste

Place dandelions, onions, and dill in a large bowl and toss together. In another little bowl stir together olive oil, lemon juice, salt, and pepper. Pour over the salad.

Native Names for Dandelion Greens

Sugt'stun name for dandelion: Salalrit

Some Sugt'stun language words:

- vegetables - Naulrit - (plants that grow)
- January - Cuqlirpak Tanqik
- February - Nanilnguq Tanqik
- March - Iciwallaq Tanqik
- April - Saqulet Tanqiat

Learning Activity

Get several raw leafy greens (dandelion greens, spinach, kale, arugula, butter lettuce, romaine) and put one of each on a plate for each student. Have them try each leafy green and then answer the questions below:

- Describe each leafy green: taste, shape, color, texture, etc.
- Sketch each leaf and color.
- Write what you liked best and least about each leafy green and why.
- Compare and contrast each leafy green with all the others.



For more information, visit the Alaska Farm to School website at:

<https://www.farmtoschoolalaska.org/harvestofthemonth/>