

New greens to power up your salad



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By Jessica DeCostole

These up-and-coming greens give you great health benefits—and flavor, too.

Mizuna

One of the mildest mustard greens, mizuna—often found in mesclun mixes—is high in immune-boosting vitamin C, folate, and iron. It also contains powerful glucosinolates—antioxidants linked to decreased cancer risk, says Tanya Zuckerbrot, RD, author of *The F-Factor Diet*. Cultivated in Japan since ancient times, mizuna brings an exotic, slightly spicy flavor to the table.

Prep tip: Part of mizuna's allure is its feathery, light appearance—but its edges dry out easily. To get the freshest bunch, look for crisp green leaves that aren't wilted.

Mache

Twenty years ago, San Francisco-based chefs brought mâche (a.k.a. lamb's lettuce) seeds home from France and introduced its mild, nutty flavor to American restaurant patrons. Now it's a Whole Foods staple.

A one-cup serving delivers 80% of your daily requirement of folate, which helps prevent certain birth defects and keeps your heart healthy. It also packs 2 grams of filling fiber, 4 milligrams of iron (needed for forming red blood cells), and more than 250 milligrams of heart-healthy omega-3 fatty acids, Zuckerbrot says.

Prep tip: Rinse mâche briefly to avoid damaging its delicate leaves.

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Watercress

In addition to delivering high doses of vitamins A, K (needed for normal blood clotting), and C, watercress contains isothiocyanates—compounds that boost your body's natural detoxifying abilities. It may also lower your breast cancer risk and strengthen your bones (one cup has 4 milligrams of calcium).

Prep tip: Wash this peppery and pungent green carefully and thoroughly, as it tends to be sandy.

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Dandelion Greens

Traditionally used by Native Americans for medicinal purposes, these greens keep the gastrointestinal tract running smoothly by promoting the growth of bacteria that aid with digestion; they also act as a mild laxative to relieve bloating and constipation, Zuckerbrot says.

One cup provides more than 100% of your daily dose of vitamin A—crucial for keeping your eyesight strong—and a whopping 103 milligrams of calcium.

Prep tip: Look for dandelions with smaller, slightly curled leaves because they're less bitter.

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Purslane

It may be considered a pesky weed by many farmers, but this superfood's a worthy addition to any salad bowl. It is lemony, succulent, and crisp—and packs up to 400 milligrams of omega-3 fatty acids per serving.

Purslane is also a great source of vitamins A and C, and it contains up to 15 times more of the cancer-fighting antioxidant melatonin than many other fruits and vegetables.

Prep tip: These greens don't stay perky for long, so maximize freshness by storing them with stems in cold water in the refrigerator.

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Perfect pairings

Mix up a better salad with these suggestions from Jackie Newgent, RD, author of *Big Green Cookbook*, and Karen Lee, cooking-school teacher and author of *The Occasional Vegetarian*.

- **Mizuna** Mizuna mixes well with peppery arugula. You can top it with grilled shrimp, which adds texture without masking the greens' flavor. Warm dressing to soften the jagged edges of the leaves.
- **Mache** A simple salad of thinly sliced radishes and onions won't overpower this green, which also adds freshness to burgers. Drizzle with olive, walnut, or flaxseed oil, or use a light vinaigrette.
- **Dandelion greens** Cut bitterness by adding romaine lettuce, chopped bacon, anchovies, or sun-dried tomatoes. The acid in vinegars and citrus juices also balances harshness.
- **Purslane** Chop cucumbers and tomatoes to create a hearty base, then sprinkle purslane on top with a drizzle of lemon juice and a little salt to create a light summer salad.
- **Watercress** Spinach and grilled shiitake mushrooms stand up to its delicious peppery flavor. Watercress is native to Asia, so it's traditionally paired with dressings that contain rice vinegar or sesame oil.

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