



"Cradle to Table Nutrition for Early Years Learning"

Page 1 of 1

The ultimate salad leaves

We are all becoming a little bit more cosmopolitan or continental. Most of us eat foods from all corners of the globe. Perhaps now is the time to spice up our salads and be a bit more adventurous than iceberg lettuce.

There are many different salad leaves we can choose from these days – supermarket chiller cabinets are heaving with bags of ready prepared salad leaves. Combinations of different varieties like frisée, lamb's lettuce, spinach, mizuna, radicchio adds great depth of flavour meaning less dressing is needed – and less dressing means less calories.

Hidden amongst the ingredients are some of the salad worlds best kept secrets. Some leaves are so special they have been deemed superfoods and others are so packed full of beneficial nutrients they should not be left out. So who are the salad leaf champions?

- Baby spinach
- Watercress
- Rocket

Each of these have their own unique texture and flavour and a unique complement of vitamins, minerals and antioxidants that can make a sensational health-giving disease-fighting salad.

Lets compare 100g of super leaves to 100g of iceberg lettuce:

	Iceberg	Baby spinach	Rocket	Watercress
Energy kcals	13	25	25	22
Protein g	0.7	2.8	2.6	3.0
Fibre g	0.6	2.1	1.6	1.5
Beta carotene mcg	50	3535	2373	2520
Vitamin C mg	3	26	15	62
Vitamin E mg	0.57	1.71	0.43	1.46
Calcium mg	19	170	160	170
Iron mg	0.4	2.10	1.46	2.20
Folate mcg	53	114	97	45

Without exception, these leaves have more fibre, beta carotene, vitamin C, calcium and iron than the traditional iceberg. Baby spinach is also an excellent source of folate and vitamin E.

The colour of the leaves is also a clue to the nutrients they contain. The darker the leaves the more phytonutrients they contain.

Spinach is also rich in leutin and zeaxanthin which help to prevent macular degeneration, the leading cause of vision loss in older people. Eat spinach with other vitamin C rich foods like red or yellow peppers to maximise the absorption of calcium and iron.

Rocket and watercress are rich in other antioxidants that seem to play a role in reducing the risk of cancer.

Always wash salad leaves thoroughly before eating to remove dirt and contaminants. Dress the leaves with a light olive oil-based dressing to maximise the absorption of vitamin E; a squeeze of fresh lemon juice will provide vitamin C to aid the absorption of calcium, iron and other minerals.

Grub4Life.com does not accept responsibility for the adequacy or accuracy of this information. Copyright Grub4Life.com 2009. All rights reserved. No copying, downloading, publishing or republishing without written permission from Grub4Life.com authorised representatives. Full details of Grub4Life licence details are at <http://grub4life.org.uk/factsheets/n9d01db72a89980d20173b76b7fe35e47/>.