



Lettuce

Growing and Harvest Information

Lettuce is a cool-weather crop with a short growing period. Since lettuce is fast growing, it is best to plant small amounts at a time, sowing seeds every 2 weeks for continual harvest. Plant seeds in early spring, as soon as the ground can be worked, in well-drained, loose soil. Plant seeds 1/2 inch deep and, depending on the variety, 4-16 inches apart. Cover seeds with 1/4-1/2 inch of soil. Later on, add mulch to retain soil moisture and control weeds. Water regularly throughout the growing season and if the leaves start to wilt.

Harvest lettuce when it is full size and almost mature, when it is still tender. To harvest, pull off outer leaves as needed or use a sharp knife to cut below the lowest leaves to harvest the whole head (or pull out the entire plant with its roots). Harvest lettuce in the morning to preserve crispness and as needed for the best flavor.

Introduction

Ancient Egyptians were the first to cultivate lettuce. In Early to Middle Dynasty (about 2,500 BCE) tomb paintings, lettuce is realistically represented with thick stems and long, narrow, pointed leaves. Today, there are 7 main types of lettuce, and about a dozen varieties within each type.

Preservation

Storage:

- Wrap fresh, unwashed leaves in plastic wrap and store in the refrigerator for up to a few days.
- Cooler temperatures keep lettuces fresh longer, so store lettuce on the top shelf of the refrigerator, against the back wall.
- Revive limp leaves by immersing in ice water a few minutes.
- As possible, prepare lettuce immediately before serving because torn, cut, sliced or damaged edges discolor quickly and release ascorbic acid oxidase, which destroys Vitamin C.
- Avoid storing lettuce with apples, bananas, or pears because they release ethylene gas, a natural ripening agent, which causes lettuce to decay quickly.
- Compost lettuce that looks slimy, indicating bacterial decomposition, or has black spots, which may be mold.

Nutritional Benefits

Source	Rating
Vitamins	EXCELLENT
Minerals	GOOD
Fiber	GOOD

Use By Guide

Vegetable State	Use by
Refrigerated	1-4 weeks (by variety)



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Fun Fact:

Lettuces with a darker green color have a higher content of beta carotene (Vitamin A).

Try Lettuce In:

Salads
Sandwiches
Smoothies
Stews
Wraps

Prepare Lettuce Like This:

Sauteed
Steamed
Wilted
Stewed
Broiled
Raw

Preparation

Recipe 1: Grilled Romaine Lettuce

Ingredients:

- 2 heads of Romaine lettuce, halved lengthwise
- 2 tbsp olive oil
- 2 tsp garlic, minced or powdered
- 1/2 cup of hard cheese, grated
- salt and pepper, to taste

Directions

- Remove leafy outer leaves of each head of romaine and rinse under cold water.
- Place flat half of lettuce down, drizzle with olive oil, and dust with garlic, salt and pepper. Flip over and repeat.
- Prepare grill for high heat.
- Place half heads flat side down over coals. Grill for 2-3 minutes, until blackened/charred. Turn and repeat, until entire head is charred, removing any leaves that come loose.
- Once charred, remove from heat, place on a platter, and sprinkle with grated cheese. Serve immediately
- Note: Do not eat the base (bottom two inches) because lettuce tends to collect dirt here. However, do not remove the base before cooking because the lettuce will fall apart.
- Alternative: Broil lettuce instead of grilling.

Recipe 2: Homemade V8 Juice

Ingredients:

- 4 cups tomato, diced
- 1/2 cup carrot, diced
- sliver of beet (for color)
- 1 tbsp Worcestershire sauce
- 1/2 tsp each of salt & pepper
- 1 cup water, divided
- 1/4 cup spinach
- 1 tbsp parsley

Directions

- Combine tomatoes, carrots, beet, Worcestershire sauce, salt, pepper, and 1/2 cup of water in a saucepan. Bring to a boil. Then, reduce heat, cover, and let simmer for 20 minutes.
- Add the spinach and parsley and simmer for another 5 minutes. Remove from heat and let cool for 10 minutes.
- Pour in a blender, add remaining 1/2 cup of water and purée until smooth, about 2 minutes. Strain through a fine-mesh sieve and serve chilled. Juice will keep for about 1 week. Store in the refrigerator and shake before serving.