

# Going Green

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*Adapted from Chicago Sun-Times Food Section (8/28/08) and Food Values of Portions Commonly Used, by Jean A. T. Pennington.*

“Going Green” is a slogan for becoming environmentally conscious and being proactive in saving our planet. As a nutritionist, I have another meaning for “Going Green.” It is a drive to encourage people to eat more vitamin and mineral packed leafy greens. They are low in carbohydrates, low in calories, alkalize excess acid, help the body detoxify and are rich in essential nutrients, especially Vitamin C and hard-to-get magnesium. They should become a dietary staple. So let’s take the mystery out of the various types of greens with the following:

NAME	APPEARANCE	TASTE	PREPARATION	KEY NUTRIENTS
Collards	Round, grayish green leaves on stalks that aren't edible	Slightly bitter	Longer cooking greens that need liquid when steaming, braising or sautéing	Vitamin A, K and C, Folate, Calcium
Bok Choy	Dark green leaves atop chunky white stalks	Sweet, mild and crunchy	Stir-fried, but stalks take longer to cook than leaves	Vitamin C, Calcium, Potassium
Broccoli Rabe/Rapini	Similar in appearance to broccoli with leaves and flowerheads	Chewy and tangy	Sautéed, braised or roasted	Vitamin A, C and K, Calcium, Iron, Potassium
Frisee	Narrow, curly green leaves	Chewy and mild	Raw in salads	Folate, Vitamin A and K
Spinach	Tender green leaves and stems	Sweet and delicate	Raw in salads, quickly sautéed, stuffed into meats or used in pasta dishes	Iron, Vitamin A, C, E, K, Magnesium, Calcium,
Mizuna	Tender, delicate leaves with a lacy look	Spicy	Raw or just-wilted	Vitamin C and Folic acid
Kale	Blue-green, curly leaves with tough stalks that should be discarded	Peppery and cabbage-like	Braised, steamed or sautéed	Beta-carotene, vitamin K, C, lutein, zeaxanthin
Swiss Chard	Numerous varieties – including red, green and rainbow – with vibrant stems and tender leaves	Sweet and relatively tender and mild	Wilted, sautéed or incorporated into soups and stews; also raw if baby chard	Vitamin A, K, and C, Magnesium, Manganese
Escarole	Features somewhat tough, flat, pale-green leaves	Pleasantly bitter and lettuce-like	Can be incorporated raw into salads, steamed, braised or added to soups	Vitamin A, K, Folate
Mustard	Potent, curly-edged medium green leaves	Fiery, like its hot namesake	Once stems and ribs are removed before can be steamed, braised or sautéed for 20 minutes or more to remove some of the bite	Vitamin A and C, K, Calcium, Magnesium
Dandelion Greens	Jagged leaves that are similar in appearance to arugula	Pungent and bitter	Raw when young and tender; braised or sautéed as leaves become tougher	Calcium, Vitamin A and C, and Magnesium
Arugula	Tender, ragged, dark green leaves	Peppery	Raw in salads or quickly sautéed	Vitamin C and Potassium

If you don't have the time and still can't get used to the slightly bitter taste of some greens, try eating a half bag of Earthbound (or other brand) of organic **baby greens** in a salad daily. They're mild in taste, contain a variety of greens (including red and green Romaine, red and green Oak Leaf, red and green Chard, Mizuna, Arugula, Frisee and Radicchio), and don't even have to be washed. Another way to get your greens is to hide them in soups and stews. Even if the kids pick them out, they'll still get some of their health benefits from the broth. My favorite method for "hiding" greens is to use them to make pesto (see recipe below), which I freeze in small zip loc bags and use as a topping for fish, chicken, and pasta.

### **Nutty Greens Pesto**

1 pound argula, spinach, and/or mizuna

1 clove garlic, peeled

6 ounces silvered almonds, or hazelnuts or macadamia nuts, chopped

2 ounces Parmigino-Reggiano and/or Sheep Romano, freshly grated

Juice of ½ lemon

½ cup olive oil

Salt and pepper, to taste

Blend greens and garlic in a pot of boiling water for about a minute. Drain and place in ice water. Wrap greens in paper towels or kitchen cloth and gently squeeze to remove excess water. Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Spread nuts evenly on a sheet pan in a single layer and roast them for about 5 minutes, rotating halfway through so edges don't burn. Place greens and garlic in a food processor and pulse to combine. With the motor running, add toasted nuts, followed by cheese, lemon juice, olive oil and salt and pepper to taste. Puree until all ingredients are coarsely combined, but not completely smooth (about 30 seconds). Use sparingly as topping for fish, chicken, pasta, and pizza. Pesto can be frozen in small quantities.