



MEDIA RELEASE

TENNESSEE DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
MARKET DEVELOPMENT DIVISION

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CONTACT: Pamela Bartholomew
615-837-5160
Pamela.Bartholomew@TN.gov

Simply Fantastic Greens for Spring

NASHVILLE -- Green is the first color of spring, and greens are the first crops of the garden season. In Tennessee, spring starts with turnip and collard greens, plus all kinds of lettuces. Spinach, though, is perhaps the modern favorite spring green.

Famously nutritious, it's also tender and sweet to eat from baby stage to full broad leaf. Spinach cooks quickly and can be successfully added to just about any savory dish for added color and nutrition.

Spinach and other "cool weather" crops like cabbage, potatoes, Brussels sprouts, onions, peas, broccoli, cilantro and asparagus begin to show up in farmers markets and on CSA, "community supported agriculture," farms as early as March and will last as long as the weather remains cool and damp. Summer's heat turns greens tough and peppery or bitter, and other cool crops begin to succumb to pests, molds and stress.

The secret of using spring greens successfully has to do with keeping them fresh in the refrigerator after purchase. To store fresh greens properly, immediately dispose of any bad leaves; the ethylene gas produced by decomposing plants will speed deterioration of every plant product around it. Keep the greens whole until they're used; stems and stalks can be trimmed away.

To wash before storing, place greens in a clean sink or other large container filled with cold water. Agitate the leaves gently to shake off garden debris then let the leaves sit still for a couple of minutes allowing time for grimy particles to settle to the bottom of the container. Carefully lift out the greens, empty the grimy water and go through the washing process again. Salad spinners are a real time saver for this task.

Once clean, the most important step of the process is to get the greens as dry as possible without bruising the leaves. Spread the greens in a thin layer on a clean towel and gently press and pat them dry with another clean towel.

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BOX 40627, NASHVILLE, TN 37204
www.picktnproducts.org

Finally, take a large clean tea towel or other kitchen towel, spread the clean, dry greens in a thin layer across it, then roll them up in the towel. Secure the firm roll of greens with a rubber band or kitchen twine. The towel will continue to wick away moisture from the greens while they wait in the crisper to be used. The relatively new “green bags” also work very well and can be used over and over. Regular plastic bags actually trap ethylene gases and accelerate decomposition.

Find recipes for local greens and other early crops at the Pick Tennessee Products web site, www.picktnproducts.org. Pick Tennessee Products is a program developed by the Tennessee Department of Agriculture to help consumers identify and choose Tennessee farm products.

To find local farms, farmers markets and CSAs, or for more recipes featuring seasonal farm direct products, visit www.picktnproducts.org.

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Please find downloadable hi-res photograph at www.picktnproducts.org.

Garlic Spinach Saute
Makes 2 servings.

1 teaspoon olive oil
1 garlic clove, minced
2 cups fresh spinach leaves
1/4 teaspoon kosher salt
1/4 teaspoon black pepper

Heat the oil in a large skillet over medium-high heat. Add the garlic and sauté 30 seconds. Add the spinach and cook 4 minutes or until the spinach is wilted. Sprinkle with the salt and pepper and serve immediately with tongs or a slotted spoon.