

# Swiss Chard: the “new” spinach

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Swiss Chard has been a very popular part of Mediterranean diets for centuries, but in this part of the world, we're just getting familiar with it. While Swiss Chard is not native to Switzerland, it is named after a Swiss botanist. It is a beautiful, leafy green vegetable that is great as a stand-alone dish or can be easily substituted into recipes in place of spinach for a little variety in your leafy green intake.

Swiss Chard is packed full of essential nutrients: vitamins, minerals, and phytonutrients. It's also super low in calories. There are so many reasons to eat Swiss Chard!

## Health Benefits

### Digestive Health

Swiss Chard has been the subject of some interesting health studies. Its combination of vitamins, minerals, phytonutrients, and fiber has demonstrated to be protective against digestive tract cancers. Specifically with colon cancer, consuming Swiss Chard has been shown to reduce the incidence of precancerous lesions. Generally, this vegetable is an excellent source of vitamin C, the primary water-soluble antioxidant in the body. Vitamin C stops free radicals and prevents oxidative damage, including damage to DNA, which can lead to cancer.

### Eye Health

Swiss Chard is an excellent source of Vitamin A because of its concentration of beta-carotene. Once in the body, beta-carotene converts to vitamin A which is known for its role in eye health. In a study of over 500,000 women, those who consumed the highest amounts of dietary vitamin A had a 39% reduced risk of developing cataracts. Swiss Chard is also an excellent source of lutein and zeaxanthin that protect the lens and retina from oxidative damage.

### Bone Health

Dairy foods are often noted as the best source of dietary calcium; unfortunately for many, dairy is also linked to chronic inflammation. With reduced dairy consumption, people often worry about bone health. Worry no more! Swiss Chard is a decent source of calcium as well as an excellent source of vitamin K. Vitamin K is very important in maintaining bone health because it activates osteocalcin, the main protein in bone matrix. Magnesium is another key mineral in bone health which is also found in Swiss Chard.

## Preparing

Running cold water over Swiss Chard just prior to using it is the best way to clean it. It's best not to soak Swiss Chard because the water-soluble nutrients will leach out.

The leaves are definitely the preferred part of the plant to eat, but the stem is edible and compliments the flavor of the leaves when eaten together. The leaves can be sliced to your preferred thickness. The stems take a bit longer to cook. It might be best to start them for a few minutes before adding the leaves in the cooking process.

## Cooking

To retain the rich flavor and abundant nutrients, avoid overcooking Swiss Chard. There are two methods of cooking that are considered best for this leafy green:

### Al Dente

Swiss Chard al dente is tender on the outside and firm on the inside. The best approach to obtaining al dente is by "quick boiling". The quick boiling method of cooking is dropping the cut Swiss Chard into boiling water for one minute. This process softens the cellulose and hemicellulose making it easier to digest while retaining all the other benefits.

### Healthy Sauté

Another method many people appreciate is the healthy sauté method. Add a small amount (about 1-2 TBSP) of bone broth to a wok, bring to a boil, add the Swiss Chard, and toss repeatedly for 1-2 minutes just like you would with a stir-fry. Bone broth enhances the flavor of the vegetable and it is usually consumed with the meal bringing with it any of the potentially leached nutrients from cooking.

## Include Swiss Chard in Your Diet

Eating nutrient dense whole foods is the preferred approach to providing your body with the full spectrum of nutrients it needs to thrive. Swiss Chard is one of those whole foods with key micronutrients that support healthy immune function.

*Are you struggling to eat a whole food, nutrient dense diet? Connect with [A to Zinc Nutrition, LLC](#) for a free assessment to find your food and nutrient path to help you reach optimal health.*