

FUTURE 50 FOODS



Leafy Greens
Mushrooms
Nuts & Seeds

50 foods
for healthier
people and a
healthier planet



**FUTURE 50 FOODS IS
THE BEGINNING OF A
JOURNEY AND A WAY
FOR PEOPLE TO MAKE A
CHANGE, ONE DELICIOUS
DISH AT A TIME.**





LEAFY GREENS

These are arguably the most versatile and nutritious of all types of vegetables. They are grown as part of other vegetables, such as beets and pumpkins, and as the leaves themselves. They contain dietary fibre, lots of vitamins and minerals, are low in calories, and have been associated with various health benefits³⁶. Leafy greens are typically fast-growing and, eaten cooked or raw, are part of a wide variety of dishes all over the world.





Beet greens

Beta vulgaris

Beets have grown in popularity in recent years and are associated with a variety of health benefits. However, the leafy green part of the beetroot is the most nutritious part of the plant and is often overlooked and left unused.

With a flavour and nutrition profile similar to that of Swiss chard, beet greens are rich in vitamins K and A³⁷. Compared to greens such as turnip and mustard greens, beet greens contain higher levels of magnesium and potassium. Per serving, beet greens provide up to 25 percent of the recommended daily allowance of magnesium, which helps regulate a variety of biochemical reactions in the body, including muscle and nerve function, blood pressure and blood glucose control. Studies in the US and Europe report that around 50 percent of people get less than the recommended levels of magnesium^{38, 39, 40}.

Beet greens also contain as much iron as spinach, plus the plant pigment lutein, which is associated with good eye health⁴¹. Beet plants thrive in cooler temperatures, are tolerant of frost and grow at a rapid pace.

They are a nutrition-packed addition to stews, soups and salads. With a subtle taste that is similar to kale, beet greens are delicious sautéed in olive oil or balsamic vinegar for a tasty side dish. Developing a soft and sweet taste when cooked, they can even be baked to make crisps.



Category

Leafy Greens



Broccoli rabe

Brassica ruvo

This cruciferous green is related to turnips and mustard greens, and not, perhaps surprisingly, to its familiar namesake. With long stems, small, broccoli-like flower heads and jagged, turnip-like leaves, broccoli rabe is peppery and slightly bitter.

Broccoli rabe is higher in folate than both mustard greens and turnips and, like kale, is a source of vitamins A, C and K⁴².

Common in Italy, Portugal, Poland and Ukraine, broccoli rabe – or Italian broccoli

as it's also known – is easy to grow and can be harvested within seven to eight weeks of planting. The young, immature flower heads are the most commonly eaten parts; sometimes the flower heads are slightly sprouted and purple in colour.

Boil or sauté it with garlic and chilli. All parts of broccoli rabe are delicious paired with grains, nuts and other vegetables. It is often served as a side dish alongside fish and potatoes.

Kale

Brassica oleracea var. sabellica

Kale is a brassica and belongs to the cabbage family. It is a hardy plant, able to withstand temperatures as low as -15 degrees Celsius. It has lushly dark leaves that can be curly or smooth and sometimes have a blue or purple tinge. The taste, distinct and slightly bitter, is reported to become sweeter when exposed to extreme cold such as a heavy frost, but more bitter and unpleasant in hot weather.

Kale is grown throughout Europe and in the US, available year-round, and packed with vitamins A, K and C, as well as being a good source of manganese and copper.

The leaves and stems can be eaten together. The stems are tough while the leaves are soft, so may require different cooking times. Kale can be eaten raw, roasted, boiled, sautéed or even grilled. Because of its high nutritional value, kale has been dried and turned in to powder to be added to soups and smoothies and made into chips eaten as a savoury snack. It can be enjoyed as a side dish or mixed with other vegetables in stews, curries, or soups.



Moringa

Moringa oleifera

Moringa, also called the drumstick or horseradish tree, is often referred to as 'the miracle tree' because of its exceptional qualities. It is fast-growing and drought-resistant. The trees form a natural windbreak, helping to prevent soil erosion in countries such as Haiti. The leaves are highly nutritious and grow plentifully all year round. Many parts of the tree are used in traditional medicine throughout India and Asia. Products containing moringa have recently gained in popularity as health supplements due to their nutritional value.

Moringa can be added to a variety of dishes. When cooked, the leaves have a similar flavour to other leafy green vegetables and can be swapped for them. It can also be turned into a powder to be used in smoothies, soups, sauces and teas, or cooked into curries or baked goods to add extra flavour and give a nutritious boost⁴³. It contains vitamins A, B, and C, calcium, iron and amino acids, which are essential for good health.

In some countries, such as the Philippines and Indonesia, it is common to cut the long seed pods (known as 'drumsticks') into shorter lengths to be stewed in curries and soups. The flowers can be added to salads, fried as a snack, or used to make tea. Some popular dishes that feature moringa are South Indian sambar made with lentils, Thai kaeng som curry, and Filipino tinola and udan.



Category

Leafy Greens



Pak-choi or bok-choy (Chinese cabbage)

Brassica rapa subsp. chinensis

Pak-choi is crisp with a mild, cabbage-like flavour. Like lettuce but with more crunch, it is one of the most popular vegetables in China and is grown in East Asia all year round. It has a variety of different names, among them horse's ear, Chinese celery cabbage and white mustard cabbage. Its white or pale-green stalks and deep-green leaves are high in

vitamins K and C. Although the stalks can be eaten raw when the plant is very young, they are best blanched in boiling water, stir-fried or steamed to retain their delicate flavour and crunchy texture. Pak-choi goes well with rich, sticky sauces to complement the mild flavour and crunchy texture.

Pumpkin leaves

Cucurbita pepo

Although the leaves of this creeping vine are commonly eaten in Africa and Asia, the pumpkin plant is believed to have first been cultivated thousands of years ago in Central America. It belongs to the cucurbit family and loves sunny, well-drained soil. Pumpkin leaves are often left behind when pumpkins are picked, wasting the abundance of nutrients packed in to these versatile leafy greens. Pumpkins, like many other plants, have multiple edible parts that should not be wasted.

Pumpkin leaves are a good source of iron, vitamin K and carotenoids. Although there is no scientific evidence to prove it, many associate the leaves with increased fertility.

Pumpkin leaves taste like a cross between asparagus, broccoli and spinach and, when young, can be eaten fresh in salads. Steaming or sautéing the leaves brings out the sweetness as some varieties may have a more bitter flavour. In West Africa they are often added to soups and stews.

Red cabbage

Brassica oleracea var. capitata f. rubra

It may be called red cabbage, but this brassica has a chameleon-like quality, changing colour based on the pH-value of the soil in which it is grown. It grows best in sunny conditions in moist, loamy soil.

Most commonly grown in the Americas, Europe and China, red cabbage has an earthy, slightly peppery taste and crisp texture. It's not

only more colourful and hardier than green cabbage, but also has ten times more vitamin A and double the amount of iron.

Red cabbage can be eaten raw or cooked in salads, stir-fries, in a sandwich or burger, or cooked with onions as a side dish. When cooked, the leaves will turn blue; add vinegar or acidic fruit to help maintain their red colour.

Category

Leafy Greens



Spinach

Spinacia oleracea

American consumption of this bittersweet, leafy vegetable jumped by a third during the 1930s. Spinach growers of the time credited this hike to Popeye, the cartoon character who was supposed to get his legendary strength from consuming cans of it.

Although the powers of spinach were highly overstated by Popeye, this tender vegetable does contain many important nutrients. It is particularly high in vitamins A, C and K, folate

(B vitamin) and contains iron, other minerals and phytonutrients⁴⁴. A relative of beets, chard and quinoa, spinach is fast growing and suited to cooler climates where it can be cultivated all year round.

Eaten all over the world, spinach leaves can be steamed, sautéed or stir-fried and added to curries, soups, pasta dishes and stews. They can also be served on their own, as a side or fresh in salads.

Watercress

Nasturtium officinale

Watercress, also known as nose twister, is related to mustard and is part of the brassica family of vegetables. Native to Europe and Asia, there is evidence of its existence in Ancient Greece up to 3,000 years ago. However, it wasn't until the late 20th century that it became popular commercially.

Today it is eaten in many countries and spans most continents. It prefers cool climates and can grow fully or partially submerged in water, or in rich, moist soil. If left to mature, the plant will produce pleasant-smelling white flowers, which attract bees. It also produces edible seeds, which it uses to self-sow.

Considered a 'superfood' because of its high content of antioxidants (particularly beta carotene and vitamin C), watercress also contains significant amounts of vitamins A and K. Watercress has a pungent, slightly bitter, peppery taste and crisp texture. Both the delicate green leaves and paler stems can be eaten either sautéed or fresh, and are great mixed in soups, salads, tarts and omelettes.



MUSHROOMS

There are more than 2,000 edible varieties of mushrooms. Cultivated for centuries for their taste and nutritional value, mushrooms are rich in B vitamins and vitamin D as well as protein and fibre⁴⁵. Mushrooms can also grow where many other foods would not, including on by-products recycled from other crops. They are not considered plants as they do not photosynthesise; they are classified as fungi. Their texture and umami flavour make them a tasty addition and a suitable substitute for meat.





Enoki mushrooms

Flammulina velutipes

Known as winter mushrooms or golden needles, these long, thin, delicate mushrooms grow all year round in wild clusters. Eaten commonly in East Asian countries such as China, Japan and Vietnam, from where they originate, they can be found on Chinese hackberry trees as well as mulberry, persimmon and ash trees.

Enoki mushrooms were one of the first mushrooms studied for cancer prevention (effect not proven to date) and are widely used in soups and salads. To keep their texture and enhance their lovely umami flavour, they need to be cooked quickly, either flash fried, briefly pan roasted or bathed in the residual heat of stews or stir-fries.

Maitake mushrooms

Grifola frondosa

This hefty, layered fungi can grow to more than 45 kilograms (99 pounds) giving them the title 'the king of mushrooms'. They can be found sitting at the base of oak, elm and maple trees in China, Japan and parts of the US. It has been eaten and used for its (not proven) medicinal properties for many years in China and Japan, where its name means 'dancing mushroom'.

Like other varieties of mushrooms, maitake are noted for their B vitamin content and for being a non-animal source of vitamin D. In contrast to their delicate, feathery texture, they have a strong, earthy taste and can significantly enrich the flavours of other foods in various types of dishes. They are delicious cooked with olive oil, or as a featured ingredient in omelettes, hot pots, stir-fries, stews and sauces.

Saffron milk cap mushrooms

Lactarius deliciosus

In Russia, where mushroom picking, cooking and eating is a big part of the culture, tourists may find themselves being offered saffron milk cap tasting as an activity. In Siberia, saffron milk caps are used for treating a wide variety of conditions, such as asthma, jaundice and food poisoning. However, these benefits have not been scientifically proven. Milk caps grow in pine forests in Europe and North America and are picked between August and October.

Their name comes from their beautiful saffron colour and the orange milky liquid they ooze from their gills when cut. They are a good source of fibre with a nutty, woody taste that has hints of umami and a meaty texture.

They can be fried in olive oil with garlic, parsley, cream or red wine. They can also be marinated, salted or pickled, or added to stews and soups. They feature in risottos and pasta dishes served in various restaurants across Europe and North America.





NUTS & SEEDS

There's no wonder these little powerhouses star in lists of 'superfoods', 'the best foods' and 'the foods you should eat more of'. Their protein, vitamin E and good fat content, paired with desirable flavour and texture, remains unmatched. The crunch makes them a great addition to almost every dish. Yet, of the many varieties available, only a few are commonly eaten. Used in cuisines around the world, these small embryonic plants can stand alone as snacks or add flavour and a satisfying crunch to salads, soups and desserts.





Flax seeds

Linum usitatissimum

Found across Europe, the United States, South America and Asia, but best grown in cooler climates with some sunlight, flax seeds have a multitude of uses. They are primarily used as a well-rounded, nutritious food source, but they can also be woven into strong fibres to create linen.

Flax seeds are considered a highly functional food owing to the presence of alpha-linolenic acid, an omega 3 fatty acid. Also known as

linseeds, they have been widely cultivated since the early days of civilisation and can be used in place of half the flour in any baked good, including breads and muffins.

Although they are commonly eaten on salads and cereals, they are now in high demand as an ingredient in vegetarian burger mixes and other plant-based dishes. Flax seed oil can be used for dressings, dips and sauces.

Hemp seeds

Cannabis sativa

Hemp is fast-growing, thrives in a variety of soils and doesn't require fertilisers or pesticides. While not currently one of the most commonly-consumed seeds, they have been a part of the diets of people in China and India for many centuries. They are the same species as cannabis (marijuana), but hemp seeds don't contain THC, the compound that causes the drug-like effects of marijuana.

The small, crunchy seeds have a soft, buttery texture and are rich in omega 3 and omega 6 fatty acids (good fats). They also contain protein, fibre and various vitamins and minerals, which justifies the recent re-discovery of these nutty flavoured seeds. A small serving of only 30 grams provides one gram of fibre, nine grams of protein, and a good source of iron.

Hemp seeds are available in various forms: as oil, a milk substitute, flour and in many products (including dips, sauces, soups, crackers, biscuits, breads and salads). They can be eaten raw, made into hemp meal, sprouted or made into powder.

Hemp was one of the first plants to be spun into usable fibre, roughly 10,000 years ago. It goes beyond being a nutritional food source, as it can be refined into paper, renewable plastic, clothes and biofuel⁴⁶.

Category

Nuts & Seeds



Sesame seeds

Sesamum indicum

According to Assyrian legend, when the gods met to create the world, they drank wine made from sesame seeds. Cultivated for millennia and highly resilient⁴⁷, the plants produce pods that burst open when mature to reveal their tiny golden seeds. This is where the phrase 'open sesame' comes from.

These seeds have a high oil content and are considered an excellent source of copper and magnesium⁴⁸. They can be eaten raw, toasted

and as a paste called tahini. They add crunch and a nice nutty flavour to sushi, salads, soups, noodle and rice dishes. They're commonly found in crackers and baked goods, such as the Middle Eastern dessert halva.

They also make a wonderfully fragrant oil that is great in stir-fries, drizzled over savoury dishes and in dressings.

Walnuts

Juglans regia

Possibly the oldest tree food known to humans, records report walnut consumption dating back 10,000 years⁴⁹. Containing more omega 3 fatty acids and vitamin E than many other nuts, the kernel itself resembles the two halves of a brain, reinforcing their nickname of 'brain food'.

Walnuts contain protein, vitamins and minerals, and have been claimed to be one of the most nutritious nuts. Slightly bittersweet with an oily texture, they may be pickled when young or

'wet'. However, they are more commonly eaten dried, either raw or cooked in both sweet and savoury dishes such as cakes, muesli, stews, sauces and dressings. Dry-frying or roasting turns them a lovely gold and really brings out their flavour.

Grown in China, Turkey, Iran, Mexico and the US, walnuts fare best in rich, deep soil and sunny climates and grow all year round.



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