

FARMER IN THE FIELD

Kale

by Bonnie Swank
SwankFarms.com

As farmers markets become more and more popular many are going from seasonal to year round. We have increased our winter crops over the last few years to offer our customers more of a choice during the chilly months but we've never grown kale. It seems like a no brainer since kale loves cold weather and makes a great winter crop. It's even said that after a frost the flavors gets better and the colors more intense. On the internet I found a picture of bags of Siberian Kale taken at the Matthews Community Farmers Market in North Carolina that were dusted with snow, now that's a winter vegetable.

There are purple and green varieties, curly and spiked leaves and flowering ornamentals. Kale is part of the brassica oleracea, or wild cabbage family, which also includes collard greens, broccoli, cauliflower and Brussels sprouts and contains a list of beneficial vitamins like iron, calcium, vitamin C, vitamin K and carotenoids and is considered

an anti-inflammatory. Wow! So what can you do with this vitamin packed wonder veggie? In Japan they make a drink out of kale but I think I'll stick to cooking it. Boiling will definitely rob the kale of some of the health benefits so try steaming, baking, microwaving or sautéing. I found recipes for braised kale, baked kale, kale chips, kale with pasta, kale in soups and kale as a topping for pizza. There are people out there who really love kale and I guess it's time for Swank Farms to start growing it. Meanwhile I'm going to start cooking kale and see what the love fest is all about.

If you have a favorite recipe send it to me at bonnie@swankfarms.com and I'll share it on facebook.



~ Bonnie and her husband Dick Swank are owners of Swank Farms in Hollister. To learn more visit SwankFarms.com or contact them at: 851-657-4704.

KALE AND WHITE BEAN SOUP

Recipe courtesy of Epicurios.com

Ingredients

- 1 lb dried white beans such as great northern, cannellini, or navy
- 2 onions, coarsely chopped
- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 4 garlic cloves, finely chopped
- 5 cups chicken broth
- 2 qt water
- 1 (3"x2") piece Parmigiano-Reggiano rind

Directions

- 2 teaspoons salt
- ½ teaspoon black pepper
- 1 bay leaf
- 1 teaspoon finely chopped fresh rosemary
- 1 lb smoked sausage such as kielbasa (optional), sliced crosswise ¼ inch thick
- 8 carrots, halved lengthwise and cut crosswise into ½" pieces
- 1 lb kale (preferably lacinato), stems and center ribs discarded and leaves coarsely chopped



Cover beans with water by 2 inches in a pot and bring to a boil. Remove from heat and let stand, uncovered, 1 hour. Drain beans in a colander and rinse.

Cook onions in oil in an 8-quart pot over moderately low heat, stirring occasionally, until softened, 4 to 5 minutes. Add garlic and cook, stirring, 1

minute. Add beans, broth, 1 quart water, cheese rind, salt, pepper, bay leaf, and rosemary and simmer, uncovered, until beans are just tender, about 50 minutes.

While soup is simmering, brown sausage (if using) in batches in a heavy skillet over moderate heat, turning, then transfer to paper towels to drain.

Stir carrots into soup and simmer 5 minutes. Stir in kale, sausage, and remaining quart water and simmer, uncovered, stirring occasionally, until kale is tender, 12 to 15 minutes, season soup with salt and pepper.



LACINATO KALE AND RICOTTA SALATA SALAD

Recipe courtesy of Epicurios.com

Ingredients

- ¾ to 1 lb. lacinato kale (also called Tuscan kale) or tender regular kale, stems and center ribs discarded
- 2 tablespoons finely chopped shallot
- 1½ tablespoons fresh lemon juice
- ¼ teaspoon salt
- ¼ teaspoon black pepper
- 4½ tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil
- 2 ounces coarsely grated ricotta salata (1 cup)

Directions

Working in batches cut kale crosswise into very thin slices. Whisk together shallot, lemon juice, salt, and pepper in a small bowl, then add oil in a slow stream, whisking until combined well. Toss kale and ricotta salata in a large bowl with enough dressing to coat well, then season with salt and pepper.

