

Swiss Chard: (*Beta vulgaris*) SUPERFOOD



Special points of interest:

- The stalks of Swiss chard are completely edible; in fact, in Europe they are considered the best part of the plant and the leaves are often thrown away.
- close relative of the beet root
- Don't cook Swiss chard in an aluminum pot; the chard contains oxalic acid, which will discolor the pot.

Nutrition

Vitamin K, vitamin A, vitamin C, magnesium, manganese, potassium, iron, vitamin E, and dietary fiber. Swiss chard also emerges as a very good or good source of copper, calcium, vitamin B2, vitamin B6, protein, phosphorus, vitamin B1, zinc, folate, iron, biotin, niacin and pantothenic acid. Health benefits may include maintenance of bone health and vision, prevention of various types of cancers, promotion of lung health, maintenance and immune health, and increased muscle and mental health. Swiss chard is a great anti-inflammatory food, and increases energy. Thus we can see why it makes the list of “Superfoods.”

Description

With a name like Swiss chard, you would expect it to be native to Switzerland. Even though it indeed grows best in cooler climates, it is not however, Swiss. Chard has been traced back to the gardens of Babylon. The name derives from the Latin for “thistle.”

Swiss Chard a relative to beets and spinach shares a taste profile with both of them. (Has leaves similar in looks to spinach with stems that range from white to yellow and red depending on the cultivar. A variety of these is what we refer to as “rainbow chard” with a taste similar to beet greens and spinach with a slight bitterness and saltiness



Preparation:

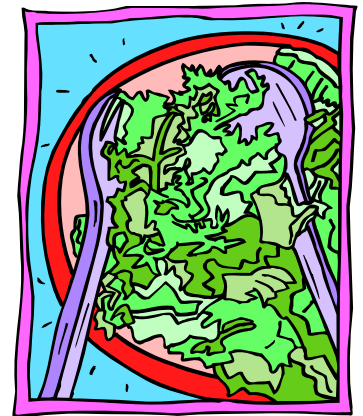
Wash the chard well to remove any sand or soil that may be hidden in the leaves. One way to do this is to immerse pieces of cut chard in a bowl of cool water, swirling them around to remove any dirt and then quickly rinsing them with cool running water. **Trim** the bottom end of the stalk. If you find the stalks to be more fibrous than desired, make incisions near the base of the stalk and peel away the fibers, like you would do with celery.

Do not cook chard in an aluminum pot since the oxalates

contained in the chard will react with the metal and cause the pot to discolor. Cook the stalks a few minutes before the leaves, since they are thicker in texture, they will take longer to cook. Chard is one of the vegetables that is recommended for quick boiling (opposed to steaming or healthy sauté) since this helps to free the oxalic acids it contains and makes the chard less bitter and sweeter.

Fresh young chard can be used raw in salads while the leaves and stalks are typically cooked (like in

pizzoccheri) or sauteed. The bitterness fades with cooking, leaving a refined flavor which is more delicate than that of cooked spinach.



chard, you can blanch the leaves and then freeze them.



olive oil, lemon juice, garlic, and cooked Swiss chard.

*Add zest to omelets and fritatas by adding some steamed Swiss chard.

*Use chard in place of or in addition to spinach when preparing vegetarian lasagna.

Nutrition Facts

(1 cup chopped)
 Calories 35
 Protein 3 grams
 Carbohydrates 7 grams
 Calcium 102 mg
 Iron 4 mg
 Magnesium 151 mg
 Phosphorus 58 mg
 Potassium 960 mg
 Sodium 313 mg
 Vitamin C 32 mg
 Folate 15 mcg
 Vitamin 5493 IU

Storage:

Choose chard that is held in a chilled display as this will help to ensure that it has a crunchier texture and sweeter taste. Look for leaves that are vivid green in color and that do not display any browning or yellowing. The leaves should not be wilted nor

should they have tiny holes. The stalks should look crisp and be unblemished. Raw chard is extremely perishable. To store, place unwashed chard in the refrigerator in a plastic bag. It will keep fresh for several days. If you have large batches of

A Few Quick Serving Ideas:

Chard is a tender green and benefits from a brief cooking period. Wilted greens are simply sautéed in oil, covered and cooked without adding any cooking liquid. Tender greens such as beet greens and spinach can also be prepared in this manner.

*Wrap Swiss chard leaves around your favorite vegetable and grain salad and roll into a neat little package. Bake in a medium-heat oven and enjoy this nutrient-superstar alternative to stuffed cabbage.

*Toss penne pasta with

Preservation:

Chard leaves freeze well after blanching, but the stems become soggy and rather unappealing. Canned chard does not fare as well producing a product similar to canned spinach.

To freeze:

Prepare a sink of cold water. Rinse chard through several changes of water lifting leaves out leaving sand and soil behind. Then separate the stems from the leaves.

Bring 4 quarts of water to a rolling boil. Drop about one pound of

whole leaves in boiling water, cover and blanch for 2 minutes (blanch stems for 3 minutes).

Remove chard from water and im-

merse in an ice water bath for 2 minutes.

Drain.

Pack in zip-closure freezer bags or freezer containers, leaving no headspace. Label, date and freeze at zero degrees for up to one year.



Wilted Swiss Chard with Garlic

Serves 4.

2 pounds Swiss chard, cleaned and coarsely chopped
3 tablespoons olive oil
2 cloves garlic, minced
Salt and freshly ground black pepper to taste
Fresh lemon juice, optional

1. Wash the greens in several changes of cold water. Fill the sink with cool water and swish the greens through the water one hand full at a time.
2. Remove the stems and chop into one-inch pieces. Set aside
3. Stack the leaves and roll them into a scroll. Using a sharp knife cut across each scroll until all the greens are

prepared.

4. Mince the garlic and set aside
5. Heat a skillet or heavy Dutch oven over medium-high heat. Add olive oil and chopped stems. Sauté 5 minutes. Add garlic and sauté an additional 15 seconds.
6. Add the wet chard one hand full at a time. Stir after each addition. After all the greens have been added, immediately cover with a tight

-fitting lid. Allow the greens to cook or wilt about 5 minutes. They should be wilted and still bright green in color.

7. Remove the lid and continue cooking over high heat until all the liquid has evaporated, about 2 to 3 minutes. Season with salt and pepper to taste. Serve immediately with a squeeze of lemon. lemon juice, if desired.



Pizzoccheri

1 stick butter (1/4 pound)
4 fresh sage leaves
1 clove garlic, peeled and
smashed
1 medium potato, peeled and
thinly sliced
1 small head Savoy cabbage,
trimmed and thinly sliced
1/2 pound flat, broad buck-
wheat noodles (pizzoccheri)
or whole wheat noodles
1 cup fontina Val d'Aosta (or
other good semisoft) cheese,
grated
1 cup Parmesan, grated
Salt and freshly ground black
pepper
2 cups homemade bread
crumbs.

1. Preheat oven to 375 degrees. Bring a large pot of water to a boil. In a small saucepan over low heat, melt butter with sage and garlic until butter turns nut-brown; be careful not to burn sage leaves. Set aside.
2. Cook potato and cabbage in boiling water until they begin to soften, just 5 minutes or so. Add pasta to same pot and continue to cook until pasta is nearly done. Drain.
3. In a large oven-proof dish, spread a layer of vegetable-pasta combination, then a layer of grated fontina, then a layer of grated Parmesan; sprinkle with salt and pepper. Continue this

layering until all ingredients are used, ending with a layer of Parmesan; ideally you will have four layers of each. Cover dish with bread crumbs and drizzle with melted butter and sage (discard garlic). Bake for about 15 minutes, or until top is golden-brown and cheese has melted. Serve hot or warm.



Chard Chips

1 bunch Swiss chard
1/4 cup olive oil, or 2
Tbsp. olive oil if you
have a silicone mat
Salt & pepper, goma-
sio, furikake, or ses-
ame seeds for sea-
soning (optional)

Preheat oven to 400°. Remove the spines from the chard and discard. Chop the leaves into chip-sized pieces — as uniform as possible — and rinse. Pat dry. If you are adding seasonings to the chard, mix them separately with the

oil. Put the chard into a bowl, pour the oil on top, and toss until everything is evenly distributed. Arrange the leaves on a baking sheet — ungreased, if you are not using a mat — and put into the oven. At this point: watch! They will not take more than 5 minutes to crisp up, and there is a fine line between crispy and delicious and burned and inedible. Check on them after 3 minutes. (This part relies in part on how well you know your own

oven.) They will be brown, or transitioning from green to brown. Remove immediately from the baking sheet with a pancake turner and spread on paper towels or a brown bag. Let cool, then eat.
Makes 3-4 cups of chips, depending on the size of your chard bunch



SWISS CHARD TUNA SALAD

1 cup chopped Swiss chard leaves
1/4 C Fresh Cilantro
5 small green onions, about 1/2 cup chopped, white & green parts
1/4 cup chopped kalamata olives
8 ounces canned tuna

DRESSING

1/2 cup mayonnaise
1 tablespoon Dijon mustard (Farmgirl uses 1/2 teaspoon)
1 teaspoon Balsamic vinegar
Salt & pepper to taste

Wash the leaves and cilantros well, dry on paper towel. Cut the ribs from the leaves. Chop one rib very small for the salad. Whisk together the dress-

ing ingredients. Add the olives, tuna and green onion. Gently fold in the greens. Season with salt and pepper.

Makes 3 1/2 Cups



La trouchia Swiss Chard Omelette

Serves 2-4

The quantities for this recipe aren't precise - just use enough egg so that the mixture doesn't seem too dry and don't skimp on the parmesan. Feel free to add chopped garlic and some mint or basil if it's in season.

1 bunch Swiss chard (silverbeet), leaves only
1/2 bunch flat-leaf (Italian) parsley
3-4 eggs, just enough to bind the mixture
50 g parmesan cheese (about 2 oz)
Sea salt and freshly ground pepper, to taste
2-3 tbsp good quality olive oil

Wash and dry the chard leaves well (I often let them soak for about 30 mins in salted water to remove some of the bitterness). Slice them very thinly and place in a large bowl with the chopped parsley leaves. In a small bowl, whisk the eggs and add to the

chard, adding three eggs at first and a fourth (or even a fifth) if necessary. Grate the parmesan and stir it into the mixture along with the seasonings.

Warm the oil over medium heat in a heavy frying pan (24 cm seems to be an ideal size) with a tight-fitting lid. Add the chard and press down with a wooden spoon to flatten the mixture. Cover, lower the heat a little and cook for about 15 mins, until the base is browned. Keep an eye on it to be sure that it doesn't cook too quickly or slowly. Now place a large plate over the pan, put on some oven mitts and flip the omelette over onto the plate. Slide it back into the frying pan, cover again and cook for another 5-10 mins, until lightly browned on the other side. Serve hot, warm or cold.

