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SPINACH

Spinach is a leafy green vegetable that can be eaten raw or cooked. Add spinach to salads, soups, dips, pastas, and pizzas. Spinach adds flavor



and nutrients. Use spinach to top a sandwich, or chop and sauté it to add a healthy addition to casseroles, lasagnas, omelettes, and quesadillas.

SELECT

- ▶ Choose spinach with dark green, crispy leaves, and avoid leaves that are wilted, limp, or yellow.
- ▶ Buy spinach in season—March to May and October to December in Mississippi. It will be more readily available and less expensive during these months.
- ▶ Check the expiration date on plastic containers or bags of fresh spinach.
- ▶ To save money, use frozen spinach when cooking or baking in a dish.

STORE

- ▶ Rinse spinach leaves thoroughly before using to remove soil, insects, and foreign material.
- ▶ Wet spinach will spoil quicker in the refrigerator. To keep it fresh longer, try this:
 - Place a layer of paper towel in a plastic container, and place the spinach on top. Gently pat the spinach dry, removing as much water as possible.
 - Seal the lid of the plastic container.



GROW

- ▶ Spinach is a cool-weather green. Plant it in spring, fall, and winter gardens.
- ▶ Grow spinach in soil that has minimal moisture.
- ▶ Plant spinach seeds 4–6 weeks before the last frost in spring and 6–8 weeks before the first frost in fall.
- ▶ Spinach is ready to harvest 45–50 days after planting.



FUN WITH FOOD CHILDREN CAN HELP

- ▶ Select spinach at the grocery store.
- ▶ Wash spinach and lay it out to dry.
- ▶ Place spinach in a container to store.
- ▶ Add spinach to pastas, pizzas, soups, and salads.



ENJOY



BLACK BEAN AND VEGETABLE QUESADILLAS

- ½ 15-ounce can no-salt-added black beans
- 2 medium zucchini
- 1 bunch fresh spinach (about 4 cups)
- 1 cup canned corn or 1 ear fresh corn
- 4 ounces cheddar cheese
- 1 tablespoon oil
- Cayenne pepper, to taste
- 1–2 teaspoons water
- ½ teaspoon pepper
- 6 8-inch whole-wheat flour tortillas
- Non-stick cooking spray

1. Wash your hands well with soap and warm water for at least 20 seconds.
2. Drain and rinse the black beans in a colander.
3. Wash the zucchini and cut into thin slices or shred with a grater.
4. Wash and chop the fresh spinach.
5. Drain the corn in a colander.
6. Grate the cheese.
7. In a large skillet over medium-high, heat the oil. Add the zucchini and cayenne.
8. Cook until the zucchini is semi-soft, about 5 minutes.
9. Add the corn and spinach. Cover and cook until tender, stirring a few times, about 5 minutes. Remove from heat.
10. Add the black beans to the vegetable mix. Smash the beans lightly with a fork. Add 1–2 teaspoons of water to make a paste.



11. Season with pepper and stir. Transfer the mixture to a medium bowl. Set the skillet aside.
12. Spread the vegetable mixture evenly on half of each tortilla. Top with cheese.
13. Fold the tortillas over, and press lightly with a spatula to flatten.
14. Spray the skillet with non-stick cooking spray, and heat to medium-high.
15. Add one folded tortilla. Cook until both sides of the tortilla are golden brown. Repeat until all of the quesadillas are cooked.
16. Cut each quesadilla into two wedges. Serve while hot.
17. Refrigerate leftovers within 2 hours.

- ▶ For more information on spinach, visit HappyHealthy.MS and click on Tips and Videos.
 - How to Store Fruits and Vegetables
 - How to Freeze Fresh Fruits and Vegetables
- ▶ For more recipes, click on Recipes.



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