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# Time for a Kale-abration!



**Introducing the wonders of kale  
to Alaskan kids**

*by Sarah R-P. Lewis*

# Kale and Alaska Go Together Perfectly

Cool and rainy — that's how a lot of Alaska is much of the year. And some people complain about it, or make vacation plans, right? But not kale. Kale likes it cool and kale likes it rainy. In fact, though kale needs sun, it actually doesn't like it when it gets too hot. Because of this, kale is one of the best vegetables for Alaskans to grow. And you don't even need a garden because kale is happy in a pot or planter.

Alaskans can plant kale indoors in pots in early spring — or straight into the garden after the last frost — then move them outside in summer. It doesn't take long until the leaves are big enough to eat. If you have a few kale plants in your garden, you can cut off some leaves for dinner, then come back a week or two later and get more. By the end of summer the leaves can sometimes be huge.

Kale belongs to the same species of vegetables as collards, cabbage, broccoli and Brussels sprouts. These vegetables are called *Brassicas*. And, believe it or not, kale probably originated in the hot Mediterranean in someplace like Italy or Greece. That's a pretty big move to Alaska, but we're sure glad kale likes it here.



## Kale: Smart and Pretty

Kale is one of the most nutritious vegetables you can grow in your garden. One cup of kale contains lots of vitamins A, C, K and B-6. It also has potassium, calcium, iron and manganese, and even carotenes. All of these good things help your body protect itself from colds, vision problems and cancer. They help your bones stay strong and even help you sleep better.

So it's really smart to eat kale, but kale is also beautiful. It comes in some really amazing colors, like purple, blue, silver, red and green. Kale leaves can be curly or ruffled, long and skinny, or wide and flat. Some people put kale in their garden just because it's beautiful to look at. But they'd better watch out, because people who know how delicious kale is might come sneak a few leaves.

Kale can be eaten raw, but a little cooking makes it even better. If you don't grow kale in your garden, you can buy it at the store or farmers market. You want to look for kale leaves that have good color and aren't wilted or yellowing. You can store your kale in the refrigerator, but you should keep it in a plastic bag so it stays leafy and doesn't wilt.



# Menu for a Kale-abration

If you want to enjoy kale in some amazing and creative ways, or if you're not sure you like kale but are willing to give it a try, plan a kale-abration with your family, friends, youth group or classroom.

Here's a great menu to celebrate kale.

## Beverage

*Banana, Strawberry and Kale Smoothies*

## Starter

*Kale Chips*

## Main Dish

*Savory Kale Bread Pudding*

## Side Dish

*Balsamic Braised Kale*

## Dessert

*Chocolate Kale Cupcakes*



# Banana-Berry Kale Smoothies

For breakfast, lunch or dinner (or even dessert), these smoothies are healthy and yummy.

## Ingredients for four to six 8-ounce smoothies

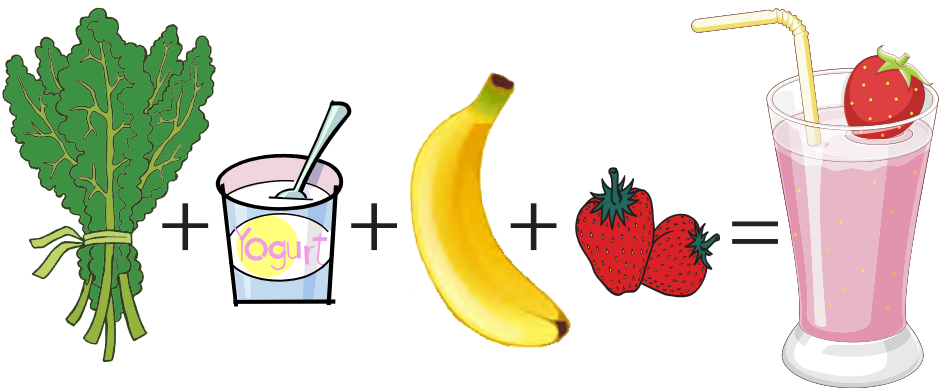
- 2 medium bananas, cut into large chunks
- 2 cups frozen strawberries (or other favorite berries)
- 4 cups kale, stemmed and torn or cut into pieces
- 2 cups low-fat vanilla Greek yogurt
- 1-2 cups low-fat milk or milk alternate (almond milk is good)

## Also needed

Blender, rubber spatula or wooden spoon and enough cups for your party

## Instructions

1. Put the banana chunks and berries into the blender and pulse until smooth (you can add some of the milk to get it going).
2. Add the kale, yogurt and milk to the blender. Blend until ingredients are well combined and the mixture is smooth.
3. Pour into cups, serve and enjoy!



# Kale Chips

If you've never tried kale, or never thought you'd like it, this is the way you want to try it first: crispy, salty and delicious, it's always a hit.

## Ingredients for one batch (which is never enough!)

- 1 bunch kale
- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- 1 teaspoon coarse kosher salt (or ½ teaspoon table salt)

## Also needed

Salad spinner (or towels), large mixing bowl, cookie sheet (probably two), tin foil, medium serving bowl

## Instructions

1. Preheat the oven to 350 degrees F.
2. Wash the kale and dry it very well in a salad spinner or between towels.
3. Pull the leaves off of the center stems and tear them into chip-sized pieces. Put the center stems into the compost bin.
4. Put kale pieces into the large bowl, pour oil over leaves and sprinkle salt over all. Toss well using your (clean) hands.
5. Spread leaves onto cookie sheet(s) in one layer and place in pre-heated oven for about 8 to 10 minutes. Leaves should be crispy and just starting to turn brown at the edges. Be very careful not to overcook because the chips will burn easily.
6. Serve immediately or cool and store in an airtight container.



# Savory Kale Bread Pudding

A good mix of fancy and homey, savory bread puddings are delicious for a meal when you want something simple but impressive.

## Ingredients for four to six main dish servings

- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 1 onion, chopped
- 1 bunch kale, washed and chopped
- $\frac{3}{4}$  cup low-sodium chicken or vegetable broth
- $\frac{1}{8}$  teaspoon nutmeg
- salt and pepper to taste plus  $\frac{1}{4}$  teaspoon salt
- 1 tablespoon cider vinegar
- 2 cups low-fat milk
- $1\frac{1}{4}$  cup shredded sharp cheddar cheese
- 4 eggs, plus 2 egg whites
- $\frac{1}{2}$  teaspoon mustard powder
- 8 cups loosely packed day-old French bread cut into 1-inch cubes
- butter or cooking spray for coating baking dish

## Also needed

Large frying pan, wooden spoon, 2-quart baking dish, large bowl, whisk

## Instructions

1. Preheat oven to 400 degrees F; butter baking dish.
2. Heat oil in large pan over medium heat; sauté onions until translucent. Add kale, toss to coat with oil and let it begin to wilt. Add broth, cover and cook 3 to 4 minutes.
3. Uncover pan and add nutmeg, vinegar, salt and pepper to taste. Allow vinegar to cook off, then remove pan from heat.
4. In large mixing bowl, whisk together milk,  $\frac{1}{4}$  teaspoon salt,  $\frac{3}{4}$  cup cheese, eggs, egg whites and mustard powder.
5. Add milk mixture to kale. Put bread into large bowl and pour kale/milk mixture over top. Allow to soak for 5 minutes.
6. Pour bread into baking dish, sprinkle remaining cheese on top. Bake, covered, for 45 minutes, until golden brown on top. Serve immediately or cover and refrigerate for the next day.

# Balsamic Braised Kale

This is one of the easiest ways to cook kale. The sweet and sour taste of the balsamic vinegar with the still-a-bit-crunchy braised kale and crispy garlic could make it a family favorite.

## Ingredients for four side dish servings

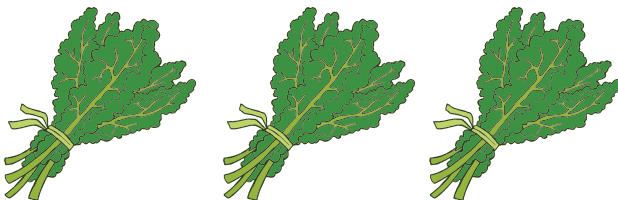
- 1 bunch kale
- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- 2 cloves garlic, sliced thin
- 2 tablespoon balsamic vinegar
- 1 teaspoon coarse kosher salt

## Also needed

Colander, large frying pan with tight-fitting lid, plastic spatula/turner or tongs, and a medium-small serving bowl

## Instructions

1. Cut off the ends of the kale stems and place whole leaves in the colander. Rinse the kale well and drip dry, but allow the leaves to remain wet.
2. Heat oil in the pan over medium-high heat; add garlic slices and fry for 30 seconds.
3. Turn heat to medium. Add the wet kale to the pan and quickly cover with the lid. Open the lid to add the balsamic vinegar and close it again. Braise for 3 minutes.
4. Lift the pan lid and flip the kale with turner or tongs.
5. Cook for an additional 3 to 5 minutes.
6. When done, put the kale in a serving bowl, pour remaining pan liquid over it and sprinkle with garlic from bottom of the pan. Serve hot.





# Chocolate Kale Cupcakes

Every celebration needs cake, and these cupcakes are amazing! No, even kale can't make cupcakes "healthy," but a sweet treat is not always a bad thing, and the kale does add some nutrition, though you'd never know it.

## Ingredients for 24 cupcakes

2 cups sugar

1¾ cups flour

¾ cup unsweetened cocoa powder

1½ teaspoons baking powder

1½ teaspoons baking soda

2 eggs

1 cup milk

¼ cup vegetable oil

2 cups kale, steamed and processed or cut into very small pieces

1 cup boiling water

cream cheese frosting (homemade or store-bought)

## Also needed

24-cupcake pan, paper cupcake liners, large bowl, wooden spoon, water kettle, wooden toothpicks, spreading knife

## Instructions

1. Preheat oven to 350 degrees F.
2. Stir together sugar, flour, cocoa, baking powder and baking soda in the large bowl.
3. Add eggs, milk, oil and kale. Stir very well.
4. Stir in boiling water. Mix very well.
5. Pour batter into lined cupcake tins, fill ¾ full.
6. Bake 20 to 25 minutes, until a wooden toothpick inserted in center comes out clean.
7. Let cool, then frost.

You won't need to store these — they'll be gone quickly — but they do refrigerate nicely for a few days if you're making them ahead.

# Now You're Ready to Party!

## Party ideas

- Give out kale seed packets as the invitations or as party gifts.
- Purple and green are great party colors and go really well with kale.
- Make the recipes together and it can be both a cooking and eating party.
- If you make the recipes ahead, don't tell your guests what's in the food and see if they can guess the secret ingredient.
- Because you'll love kale so much after trying these recipes, plant some kale in pots for your porch or deck; after they get big enough, use them as party decorations. Then eat them!
- If you have a garden, plant a few extra rows of kale and have a kale harvest party.
- Lots of people love kale and know how healthy it is, but maybe can't afford to buy it at the store. If you have a garden, "plant a row for the hungry" and donate your harvest to your local food bank or homeless shelter.



## Want to Learn More about Kale?

Here's where some of the information in this booklet came from, and other places you can look if you want more information.

### General information:

“Food Sense Guide: Kale,” by Carolyn Washburn, Utah State University Cooperative Extension, [digitalcommons.usu.edu/extension\\_curall/151/](https://digitalcommons.usu.edu/extension_curall/151/)

Sarah Lewis, UAF Cooperative Extension Service, 907-523-3280, ext. 1 or [sarah.lewis@alaska.edu](mailto:sarah.lewis@alaska.edu)

“Growing Great Brassicas in Alaska,” by Darren Snyder, [cespubs.uaf.edu/](https://cespubs.uaf.edu/)



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02-15/SL/05-22

**Revised May 2022**