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CHARD

by Julie Cascio

Nutrition and Health

Chard contains a large amount of vitamin A. It is high in calcium, iron, magnesium, phosphorus, potassium and sodium. One cup chopped chard has 35 calories.

Selection

Chard is known by several names: Swiss chard, leaf beet, seakettle beet and spinach beet are a few. It is a large-leaf vegetable with wide, flat stems similar to celery. The stems may be yellow, red or white in color. In the store, select chard with wide stalks and fresh, firm, green leaves. Avoid soggy, yellow, brown, wilted or torn leaves.

When harvesting from the garden, cut off the outer leaves 1½ inches above the ground, when they are young and tender (about 8–12 inches long).

Storage

Store chard in the refrigerator, away from apples, pears, plums or tropical fruits. Store unwashed leaves in perforated plastic bags in the coolest part of the refrigerator for 2 to 3 days. The stalks can be stored longer if separated from the leaves.

Home Preservation

Chard leaves freeze well after blanching, but the stems become soggy. Canned chard is similar to canned spinach.

To Freeze:

1. Rinse chard in several changes of cold water, lying leaves out and leaving sand and soil behind. Separate the stems from the leaves.
2. Bring 4 quarts of water to a rolling boil. Drop about 1 pound of whole leaves in boiling water, cover and blanch for 2 minutes. Blanch stems for 3 minutes.
3. Remove immediately from boiling water and immerse in an ice water bath for 2 minutes. Drain.

4. Pack in zip-closure freezer bags or freezer containers, leaving no airspace. Label, date and freeze at 0°F for up to one year.

Preparation

Young, tender chard leaves can be eaten raw in salads and sandwiches. Chard can be used in place of spinach in any recipe. When cooking older chard, the stems should be separated from the leaves as they require longer cooking.

Chard is a tender green and benefits from a brief cooking period. Spinach, beet greens and kale may be prepared in a similar manner.

Recipes

Steamed Swiss Chard

- 2 pounds Swiss chard
- ¼ cup water, plus water for washing chard
- salt and pepper
- 1 tablespoon butter (optional)

Wash greens by swishing them in cool water, one handful at a time.

Remove stems and chop into 1-inch pieces. Stack leaves and roll them together.

