

SPINACH SAVORY MUFFINS!

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What is Spinach?

Spinach is a green, leafy vegetable that is widespread in the U.S. and other countries. Interestingly, it is very closely related to beets and chard; they are all part of the goose-foot family. Spinach is an annual, however it is able to overwinter in more temperate climates. When eating spinach, you can eat almost the entire plant. Both the leaves and stems are tender and tasty.

History:

Spinach originated in central and southwestern Asia, however diffused into India, China, and then the Mediterranean diet by the 5th century. The Arabs are considered to have introduced spinach to the Mediterranean, however the Italians promoted the veggie widely in dishes galore. Spinach first appeared in England and France in the 14th century. In 1533, Catherine de' Medici, queen of France, loved spinach so much that she insisted it be served at every meal. To this day, dishes made with spinach are known as "Florentine," reflecting Catherine's birth in Florence. And during World War I, wine fortified with spinach juice was given to French soldiers weakened by hemorrhage.

Today, California grows $\frac{3}{4}$ of all the spinach grown in the United States. The United States, however is a far second globally, with China producing 85% of all spinach grown in the world.

Nutrition:

Spinach is super good for you, period!! It is extremely rich in antioxidants, especially when fresh, steamed, or quickly boiled. It is a rich source of vitamin A (and especially high in lutein), vitamin C, vitamin E, vitamin K, magnesium, manganese, folate, betaine, iron, vitamin B₂, calcium, potassium, vitamin B₆, folic acid, copper, protein, phosphorus, zinc, niacin, selenium and omega-3 fatty acids. It is also considered to be a rich source of calcium.

Fun Facts:

Spinach is mistakenly known for super high iron content. This is the case because the scientist who originally tested for iron accidentally put the decimal in the wrong place.

There are other sources that say that spinach is high in iron but it contains oxalic acid. Oxalic acid binds with iron, hence inhibiting its absorption.

The word “spinach” came from a Persian word meaning “green hand” because of the shape of the leaves.

Recipe:

Ingredients:

2 cup all-purpose flour
1 1/4th cup whole milk
1 cup cottage cheese - crumbled or shredded
1/2 cup mozzarella and parmesan
1 1/2 cup chopped spinach
1 1/2 cup sun-dried tomatoes (oiled ones, finely chopped)
1/2 cup spring onions - chopped (white and greens separate)
8-10 cloves of garlic - minced
2 tbsp olive oil
2 eggs - beaten
2 tsp baking powder
1 tsp baking soda
salt and black pepper - to taste
4 tbsp basil flakes (adjust amount to suit your taste)
2 tbsp crushed red pepper flakes

Method:

Mix together the dry ingredients in one bowl.
Cook onions and garlic in a little olive oil on in a pan.

In another bowl, beat the eggs, add to the sautéed onions/garlic mixture. Combine this with the flour mixture. Slowly add remaining ingredients.

Grease muffin pans and preheat oven to 350 deg F. Bake for 20-25 minutes, or until golden.

Once done, allow them to cool on the wire rack. Gently remove from the pan and enjoy!

