

# **KALE**

The Vegetable Powerhouse



**What is kale?** – Kale, also known as borecole, is a vegetable with green and purple leaves, and can have a smooth or curly shape. The vegetable hails from the cabbage family, which also includes broccoli, cauliflower, and collards. Varieties of kale are grown all around the world, in a number of different climates, and the plant is able to grow well into the cooler winter months. Kale has received a lot of attention in recent years for its powerhouse nutritional benefits, making kale one of the so-called "super foods."

### **Benefits of Kale**

1. Kale is among the most nutrient dense foods on the planet. Kale has essential vitamins A, C and K as well as minerals like copper, potassium, iron, manganese and phosphorus.
2. Kale is loaded with powerful antioxidants. Like other leafy greens, kale is very high in antioxidants; this includes beta-carotene, vitamin C, as well as various flavonoids and polyphenols. These all have numerous beneficial effects on health.
3. It is an excellent source of vitamin C. Vitamin C is an antioxidant that has many important roles in the body. A single cup of raw kale actually contains more vitamin C than an orange.
4. Kale can help lower cholesterol, which may reduce the risk of heart disease.
5. Kale is one of the world's best sources of vitamin K. Vitamin K is an important nutrient that is involved in blood clotting. A single cup of kale contains 7 times the RDA for vitamin K.
6. Kale is high in Vitamin A. Vitamin A is great for your vision, your skin as well as helping to prevent lung and oral cavity cancers.
7. Kale is a great detox food. Kale is filled with fiber and sulfur, both great for detoxifying your body and keeping your liver healthy.

## Types of Kale

### Curly Kale



Curly kale is probably the most recognizable kale sold in bunches at your local grocery store. It is usually bright or dark green or purple in color has tight ruffled leaves and fibrous stalks. It has a noticeable pungent flavor with peppery and bitter qualities, so seek out younger looking leaves for less bitterness.

### Lacinato Kale



Lacinato kale is a kale variety that features dark blue-green leaves with a slightly wrinkled and firm texture. The hearty leaves are tall and narrow, and retains its firm texture even after it has been cooked. It has a slightly sweeter and more delicate taste than the curly kind.

### **Red Russian Kale**



Red Russian Kale has flat, fringed leaves that resemble big oak leaves or the outer leaves of a mature cabbage. Its leaves can have a red tinge and a reddish-purple tinge to the stems, and has a great flavor that is described as sweet and mild. Be sure to remove as much of the stems as possible before cooking as it has incredibly tough fibrous stems that are difficult to chew.

### **Redbor Kale**



Redbor kale is beautiful and dark red in color that can look a deep purple. While this type of kale is edible, it also crosses over to being an ornamental plant. It is so pretty, why not grow it as a garden decoration and pick leaves as you need? Redbor makes a great addition to a meal, or even as edible plate decor.

## How to Grow Kale

### 1. Preparing Your Growing Space

- Choose a kale variety that best suits your growing climate.
- You will need at least six square inches of growing space per plant regardless of your container type.
- Most kale is ready for harvest between 45 and 75 days after transplanting.

### 2. Growing Kale from Seeds

- Mix soil and fertilizer in small pots at least six square inches, or if sowing directly to your garden, plant the seeds 1/2 inch and allow about 6 inches between plants.
- Water the plant thoroughly, allow the top layer of the soil to dry out between watering.
- Grow the seedlings until they are three to four inches high. It takes four to six weeks for your seedlings to reach this stage.



### 3. Transferring Kale to Your Garden

- Remove the kale seedlings from their container. Do so by gently patting the container on its side if you used plastic pots to start your seedlings.
- Dig holes 12 to 15 inches apart. The holes should be just deep enough for the soil to come up to the first leaves of the plant.
- Place your starts in the holes and cover with soil to the first leaves.

#### 4. Caring for and Harvesting Your Kale

- Keep the soil around your kale plants moist. Depending on the amount of sun your plants receive, you may have to water them as often as every day.
- Harvest 45-75 days after transferring to your garden. The plant should be at least 8 inches tall before you harvest the leaves
- Pick off the outside leaves first if just harvesting individual leaves
- If harvesting the entire plant, cut the stem down to about two inches above the soil with one clean cut.

#### 5. Enjoy your fresh kale!



#### Helpful Tips

- Do not plant kale near beans, strawberries, or tomatoes.
- Kale will last in the refrigerator for about three weeks.
- Kale can be eaten raw, steamed, braised, boiled, sautéed, baked, or even fried
- Whenever you shop for kale, buy lots of it because it cooks down dramatically.
- Keep blanched or precooked leftovers on hand to add to the week's breakfasts, lunches and dinners.

## How to Cook Kale

**Washing:** Avoid washing kale until just before use, since it will hasten spoilage.

**Cutting:** To make cutting easier, remove any thick stems then stack large greens on top of one another, roll them into tight bundles and slice into desired widths.

**Blanching:** Blanching reduces bitterness and softens thick greens, which is useful if you want to follow up with a quick sauté or freeze the greens for later use. To blanch kale, stir leaves into boiling water for a minute or two, drain, then immediately run under cold water.

**Braising:** Braising tenderizes and adds flavor. To braise, slow cook 1 pound of greens in a ½ to ¾ cup of seasoned cooking liquid (chicken or vegetable stock) or water for about 20 minutes or until greens are tender and ready to eat.

**Keep it Raw:** You don't actually have to cook kale in order to enjoy it. Popular kale salad recipes call for the call to be raw, and there are hundreds of green smoothie recipes that feature kale in raw form.

### Kale Recipe Ideas

- Mix it in a salad
- Pair it with nuts
- Throw it in the soup
- Put kale in a burger
- Put it in a green smoothie
- Use kale as a burrito shell
- Just sauté it
- Make kale chips



## Kale Quiz

1. Which type of Kale has dark blue-green leaves with a slightly wrinkled and firm texture?
  - a) Curly Kale
  - b) Lacinato Kale
  - c) Red Russian Kale
  - d) Redbor Kale
  
2. Kale hails from what vegetable family?
  - a) Tomato Family
  - b) Basil Family
  - c) Cabbage Family
  - d) Onion Family
  
3. Which type of kale has leaves that can have a reddish-purple tinge to the stems, and that has a great flavor that is described as sweet and mild.
  - a) Curly Kale
  - b) Lacinato Kale
  - c) Red Russian Kale
  - d) Redbor Kale
  
4. Kale is high in this vitamin which helps your vision and skin.
  - a) Vitamin A
  - b) Vitamin B
  - c) Vitamin K
  - d) Vitamin E
  
5. Which type of Kale is a dark red color that would make a great addition to a meal, or even as edible plate décor?
  - a) Curly Kale
  - b) Lacinato Kale
  - c) Red Russian Kale
  - d) Redbor Kale



True or False

6. Whenever you shop for kale, you should buy lots of it because it cooks down dramatically.
7. Most kale is ready for harvest between 15 and 30 days after transplanting.
8. Kale is only grown in one climate, and the plant is especially not able to grow well into the cooler winter months.
9. If you are just harvesting individual leaves, you should pick off the outside leaves first.
10. Blanching reduces bitterness and softens thick greens, which is useful if you want to follow up with a quick sauté.

Bonus: Can you name another great recipe that kale can be used in?

## Kale Quiz Answers

1. b
2. c
3. c
4. a
5. d
6. True
7. False
8. False
9. True
10. True

### Sources

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