

# Try This Delicious Leafy Green

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Known as “the prince of vegetables”, spinach was first cultivated in Iran around 2,000 years ago where it was called aspanakh (or ispanani) meaning “green hand”. Middle Easterners knew early on how nutritious the leafy green was. Spinach wasn’t pushed commercially in the United States until the 1920’s. However today, spinach is grown in a number of states, including Arizona, Texas, Colorado, Florida, Maryland and New Jersey. California produces more than 50% of the U.S. spinach crop, the state that also leads in the spinach processing industry, producing about 1/3 of the United States total processed spinach output.

Spinach made its way into the spotlight as an essential part of cartoon character Popeye’s diet. And while spinach can’t necessarily transform someone into a muscle-laden figure like in the cartoon, there is no doubt that spinach packs a nutritious and healthy punch. One leaf of spinach contains 19% of the daily recommended allowance of vitamin A. A normal serving of spinach yields vitamins A and C, as well as iron and calcium and only is about 7 calories.

Add some green to your plate with the delicious and healthy leafy green, spinach.



## It’s All History – Spinach

- 7th Century – Spinach was popular in China, they called it the “Herb of Persia.”
- 1552 – The smooth seeded spinach commercially sold today was discovered.
- 1920 – Spinach began to be pushed commercially in the U.S.
- 1933 – The famous spinach eating cartoon character Popeye debuted on his own show Popeye The Sailor Man. Today, more than 94% of Americans associate spinach with Popeye.

## Did You Know?

- Ninety-one percent of a spinach leaf is water.
- There are about 1,400 species of spinach known to exist.
- Ninety percent of fresh spinach in the U.S. comes from California, Arizona and Texas.
- According to the USDA, Americans consume, on average, about 3 pounds of spinach per year.
- Spinach was the first frozen vegetable to be sold for commercial use.
- Baby spinach is the most popular variety among American consumers.



## Try Spinach!

Here is a delicious recipe you can try at home using spinach.

### SPINACH DIP

Serves: 4 people

#### INGREDIENTS:

- 1 cup nonfat mayonnaise
- 1 - 16 ounce container fat free cream cheese
- 1 package dry vegetable soup mix
- 1 - 4 ounce can diced water chestnuts
- 1 -10 ounce package of frozen chopped spinach, thawed and drained

#### METHOD:

In a medium bowl mix together all ingredients. Chill in the refrigerator for 6 hours, or overnight. Serve with whole grain crackers, breadsticks, and raw vegetables.

**TIP:** For added protein and an almost complete meal, add some mashed tofu. Tofu has no flavor and will blend into the dip nicely without anyone even knowing! For a lower sodium version you may look in your grocery store for a low sodium dry vegetable soup mix.

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