







# 1. Leafy GREENS

Leafy greens will save your life.

There is almost no ailment that a daily dose of leafy greens won't help remedy in the long term. It was a long-standing joke back in my university days that the first dietary prescription for almost every client was 'increase leafy greens'... it is one of the most powerful dietary bases for a preventative diet.

When choosing your leafy greens, no matter the variety, look for bright, fresh, vital colouring, and leaves that are slightly 'crunchy'. Limp leaves will have started to oxidize and won't contain the same high levels of antioxidants and nutrients.

I have found leafy greens the easiest perennials to grow at home, some even in pots.

The bitter varieties — rocket (arugula), chicory (witlof/Belgian endive), dandelion, radish and mustard greens — are invaluable to your health, aiding digestion by increasing hydrochloric acid levels in the stomach, reducing heartburn and aiding the second phase of liver detoxification. They are also an essential addition to a self-sustaining organic permaculture garden, as they deter pests and vermin from eating your crops. Talk about multi-talented.





## ROCKET (ARUGULA)

Let's start things right with my old friend rocket. Rocket is a gorgeous perennial leafy green of the brassica family that I eat almost every day, both because it is hugely abundant and overgrown in my garden, and because it is a superstar ingredient packed head-to-toe with essential nutrients.

Rocket is a peppery, slightly bitter leafy green, and if the taste is a little strong for your preference, try eating the younger leaves. The more mature the rocket grows and the larger and darker green the leaf, the more bitter and peppery the taste.

A powerhouse of nutrition, rocket contains beta-carotene (the precursor to vitamin A), vitamin C, vitamin K, iron, and B vitamins including folate (vitamin B9), which is critical for healthy conception and the early stages of pregnancy and is essential for the activation of its other friends amongst the B-group vitamins.

Rocket is also very high in antioxidants responsible for cancer prevention, particularly in the prevention of cancers of the reproductive organs like cervical, ovarian, breast and prostate cancers.

### *the benefits*

*healthy reproductive  
system, pre-conception &  
pregnancy*



*immune function*



*cancer protective*



*skin health*

## NIN'S ZESTY ZOODLES

2 large zucchini  
(courgettes)

juice of 1 lemon, but have  
another ready, just in case

sea salt and pepper, to taste

2 red chillies  
(chili peppers), thinly  
sliced (deseeded if you  
prefer it not too hot)

3 cloves garlic,  
peeled and finely grated

¼ cup extra virgin olive  
oil, plus a little extra for  
sautéing

100 g (3½ oz) parmesan  
cheese *or* 50 g  
(3 tablespoons) nutritional  
yeast

100 g (3½ oz) rocket  
(arugula) leaves — tender  
baby leaves are best for this  
recipe

*Nin (Nate) is my eldest brother. He and his wife are easily the best cooks who ever walked this Earth. I'm talking about the kind of kitchen wizards who butter toast and it is the greatest thing you ever put near your face. Nin has never cooked anything that ever tasted bad, even when we were kids — he couldn't if he tried. His skills are definitely not genetic, because I can cook exactly half as well as he can.*

*This is my attempt at healthifying his incredibly simple chilli (chili pepper), rocket (arugula) and lemon pasta. His version uses traditional wheat pasta (which he makes himself) and a bucket of parmesan cheese as big as his head. My version uses a little more restraint and a serious increase in vegetable content. Both taste amazing. Rocket adds an irreplaceable peppery freshness to the dish.*

SERVES 2 AS A MAIN;

ALSO MAKES A QUICK AND TASTY SIDE DISH

First, make 'spaghetti' out of the zucchini. This can be done with a commercially available spiralizer; alternatively, slice the zucchini into long, thin strips to resemble 'noodles' or pasta with a kitchen machine or mandolin, or with a vegetable peeler and a light hand.

Next, in a small bowl, whisk together the lemon juice, salt, pepper, chilli, garlic and half the olive oil. Taste often and adjust if desired. When the four main ingredients of oil, lemon, chilli and garlic are in the right balance, this basic dressing will really sing. It shouldn't be too mild or oily, not too tangy garlic, not too zingy lemon ... to use a Goldilocks cliché, each must be just right. If it doesn't taste great with your finger dipped in the bowl, it won't taste amazing as a completed dish. Now, warm your zucchini noodles in a hot pan with a little oil to stop them burning (1 tablespoon will be more than enough). Once warm but not cooked to the point of falling apart (they should have the texture of al dente pasta), take the pan off the heat, add the dressing and stir through. While still off the heat, stir through the parmesan cheese, then add rocket leaves and stir through again. Ensure all ingredients are very well combined.

Serve while still warm.





# the benefits

healthy bones and joints



energy production



heart health



immunity



## SPINACH

A regular nibble of spinach helps so many conditions in some way, due to its sheer abundance of nutrients and the body systems they are indicated in assisting (i.e. all of them).

Spinach delivers a massive dose of vitamin K (for bone and digestive health), vitamin A (for a healthy pregnancy, skin and immunity), manganese (for healthy joint maintenance and repair), B complex vitamins (for energy production and as a co-factor for countless

functions in the body, particularly B9 for a healthy pregnancy), magnesium (for muscles, physical and emotional health, to aid a good night's sleep, and for bone health), calcium (for bone health), vitamin C (for glowing skin, wound repair, immunity), fibre (for weight regulation) and potassium (for heart health), and a bunch of lutein, a carotenoid lauded for maintaining eye health. In fact, spinach contains various other anti-cancer carotenoids, too, as well as being loaded with antioxidants and the power to reduce inflammation all over the place. Spinach is one of the most outrageously nutritious foods out there.

It is important to remember to eat both raw and cooked spinach. Spinach contains oxalic acid, a naturally occurring organic compound found in lots of different foods. Oxalic acid is destroyed by heat, but when eaten raw it can block the absorption of nutrients. The other side of that coin is that the cooking process, while destroying oxalic acid, also destroys



some of the fabulous nutrients in spinach like vitamin C, and leaches away some of its mineral content. So to get a good balance, mix it up! Raw baby spinach is a great base for a salad, for example, or you can sauté it in some coconut oil a la Garlicky Greens on page 195.

**THE LOWDOWN: INFLAMMATION**

*Inflammation is a normal part of the body's immune response. It helps to immobilize the damaged area and begin the healing process. Inflammation becomes a problem when this response gets out of control, or systemic throughout the body, especially in auto immune conditions like arthritis. This heightened immune response stresses the body's immune system as it constantly fights to alleviate unwarranted inflammation and requires nutrients that your body could be using elsewhere.*



# SPINACH, SWEET POTATO AND QUINOA BURGERS

- 2 cups cooked quinoa, cooked (refer to pack), drained and cooled
- 4 handfuls chopped fresh spinach (100 g/3½ oz if using frozen)
- 1 cup pre-cooked and cooled sweet potato (steamed/boiled is fine)
- 4 eggs
- ¾ cup rolled (porridge) oats
- chopped herbs and spices, to taste, e.g. paprika, chilli (chili pepper), parsley, oregano and basil
- coconut oil, to shallow fry

**MAKES 8–10 PATTIES**

Place all ingredients into a bowl, then mix and massage with the hands until completely combined. Allow the mixture to set in the fridge for 20 minutes.

Remove the mixture from the fridge. Form patties by taking a couple of tablespoons of mixture into your hand, rolling into a ball and pressing flat. Place a frying pan on the stove, add a couple of tablespoons of coconut oil and fry in the hot pan.

Serve hot as a bunless burger wrapped in an iceberg lettuce leaf, with slices of tomato, cucumber, red onion, pickle and avocado.







## MUSTARD GREENS

Lovely little lacey mustard greens have a similar nutrient profile to their cruciferous brethren: they contain a massive dose of vitamin K (which is anti-inflammatory and especially effective for digestive inflammation), vitamin A precursors (for healthy pregnancy, respiratory health, antioxidant, gorgeous healthy skin, immunity and a healthy pregnancy), vitamin C (for wound repair, antioxidant, skin health, immune function, cancer prevention, amongst many other functions), manganese (a powerful antioxidant and great at keeping joints healthy, like oil on the Tin Man), absorbable calcium (for bone health), vitamin E (antioxidant, skin health, immunity), fibre (detoxification and weight management, bowel health), plus iron (and the vitamin C to absorb it) and B complex vitamins.

This wondrous cacophony is like a nutrient punch in the face (in the best possible way), and eating a little of your mustard greens each week will really set up your body for stages one and two of detoxification (see ‘The lowdown’ on p. 29), cancer prevention, fighting harmful inflammation and fighting the ageing process. Mustard greens are particularly valued for their extreme dedication to kicking cholesterol’s ass: they contain phytonutrients called glucosinolates, which aid the excretion of cholesterol from the body. (Thanks, mustard greens!) They also contain a wealth of other incredible phytonutrients, the most incredible of them all being quercetin, a comprehensive compound that aids the treatment of so many ailments they are too numerous to name here.

### *the benefits*

*glowing skin*



*strong bones*



*cancer protective*



*anti-inflammatory*

Mustard greens are especially easy to grow at home and will deter pests, being a ‘bitter’ leaf (they actually taste more peppery, like rocket/arugula, than bitter). A side salad of mustard greens with some really good olive oil is wonderful enough for me as they have such a unique and delicious flavour of their own. But if you want to mix it up, behold my Peppery Pesto recipe — a spoonful on some fresh, homegrown cherry tomatoes is, honestly, extraordinary.

### THE LOWDOWN: IRON ABSORPTION

*Non-haem (non-heme) iron is the iron that we predominantly get from plant sources, while haem (heme) iron is the type we obtain from animal sources, particularly red meat. Plant-based non-haem iron is not as readily absorbed by the body as the haem iron from animals, but non-haem iron absorption is hugely increased when consumed at the same time as vitamin C. Vitamin C binds with the non-haem iron in order to be absorbed in the duodenum.*

*In order to get the most out of your plant-based iron sources, include some vitamin C-rich foods like a squeeze of fresh lemon juice over some sautéed spinach or some raw red capsicum (pepper) in a mustard green salad.*

## PEPPERY PESTO

¼ cup pepitas  
(pumpkin seeds)

¼ cup sunflower seeds

½ cup macadamia nuts

sea salt and pepper, to taste

3 cloves garlic,  
peeled and chopped

3 cups mustard greens,  
tightly packed

1½ cups extra virgin  
olive oil

MAKES APPROXIMATELY 2 CUPS

NOTE: THIS RECIPE REQUIRES SOAKING TIME

In a bowl or jar, cover pepitas, sunflower seeds and macadamia nuts with filtered water. Leave for at least 3 hours — I leave mine overnight. Soaking is not strictly essential, but makes for a much lovelier, creamier consistency. If you have a very high-powered processor at home (powerful enough to make smooth nut butters) then this step may not be necessary if you’re pressed for time.

Rinse and drain, then pop into the bowl of a food processor with the sea salt, pepper and garlic. Blend until combined. Then add the mustard greens and blend again. Slowly add the extra virgin olive oil while processing until your pesto is the perfect consistency. Your pesto should be creamy and able to be scooped out without falling off the spoon.