

Eat Green for a Healthy St. Patrick's Day and Beyond

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Chances are high that the color green will be part of your St. Patrick's Day in one form or another. Some people will go so far as to dye potatoes, pasta, milk or other foods green to make them colorful and festive.

Including green foods is important to a healthy diet—though it's not necessary to make them green artificially. Green fruits and vegetables contain health-promoting phytochemicals such as lutein. There is also evidence that eating them on a regular basis can help protect against certain cancers, maintain healthy vision and promote strong bones and teeth.

A walk through the grocery store produce section will provide a variety of examples of just how many green foods are available to use in meals and snacks. A quick list of items includes: leafy greens, asparagus, green peppers, broccoli, green beans, peas, cabbage, green onions, Brussels sprouts, okra, zucchini, Chinese cabbage, green apples, green grapes, honeydew melon, kiwifruit and limes.

The University of Nebraska-Lincoln Institute of Agriculture and Natural Resources has included a tribute to St. Patrick's Day on their website with tips for including more greens in your diet beyond the holiday. Consider these ideas:

- Make a tossed lettuce salad. Add more green with green peppers if you'd like.
- Try corned beef with cabbage — a natural for St. Patrick's Day.
- Include kiwi fruit, green grapes and/or honeydew melon in your fruit salad.

- Add avocado slices to salads and sandwiches. To maintain the green color, eat avocados immediately or sprinkle them with lemon or lime juice. Though 2 tablespoons of avocado have about 5 grams of fat, it's mostly heart-healthy monounsaturated fat.
- Enjoy your favorite veggie dip with broccoli florets or a favorite fruit dip with green apple slices.
- Make a vegetable pizza with green peppers and/or spinach.
- Serve thinly sliced green onions over rice, pasta, broiled or baked fish or soups.

Additional green ideas shared on the site: spinach; spinach noodles with topping of your choice; spinach soufflé; asparagus and/or green pepper omelets with parsley garnish; pesto on anything; cream of broccoli or spinach soups; finely diced spinach in chicken noodle, rice or orzo soups; or glazed kiwi over a sponge or angel food cake. For recipes and other tips, visit [UNL Extension](#).

Utah State University Extension Food \$ense (SNAP) has a variety of tips for meal-planning, incorporating MyPlate into family meals, a recipe of the week and more at [USU Extension Food \\$ense](#).

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