Lettuce

Lettuce is available from spring to fall

Nutrition Facts:
Serving Size = 1 c raw
- Calories – 8
- Proteins (g) – 0.4-1
- Carbohydrates (g) – 1.3
- Fiber (g) – 1
- Fat (g) – 0.1
- Vitamin A (I.U.) – 1260
- Folate (mcg) – 76
- Calcium (mg) – 19
- Potassium (mg) – 141

Lettuce offers minimal nutritional value but some types can be a good source of vitamin A and folate.

Ancient Egyptians cultivated lettuce along the Nile river valley as far back as 4,500 years ago. Compared with other salad greens, lettuce doesn’t provide much in the way of nutrients but is still one of the most popular vegetables.

There are four main types of lettuce: butterhead, crisphead, looseleaf, and romaine. Butterhead lettuce includes Boston and bibb lettuces. Both have loose, gently-folded heads with delicate leaves and are light green in color. Both have a “buttery” texture and mild flavor.

Crisphead or iceberg lettuce is a tight head with very crisp leaves that are a pale green. It has a very mild flavor.

Looseleaf lettuce doesn’t form a head but stays as an open rosette and the texture varies from soft to crisp. Color ranges from pale green to dark red depending on the variety.

Romaine or cos lettuce has a long, loose head with broad, upright leaves with a strong flavor.

What to Look for When Purchasing

Regardless of the type, select lettuce that is fresh and crisp. Avoid wilted greens and lettuce that has slimy or brown spots. Choose heavy, compact iceberg heads and smaller romaine heads to avoid bitterness.

Storage Tips

Because of the highly perishable nature of lettuce it should always be refrigerated. Wrap in a damp towel or a perforated plastic bag and place in the crisper drawer of the refrigerator.

Crisphead and romaine lettuce will keep for up to 10 days while leaf and butterhead lettuce will last only 4 days.

Cooking Tips

Wash lettuce in cool water just prior to using and dry well.

Don’t store lettuce near apples or bananas that give off ethylene gas that will cause brown spots to develop on the lettuce.

Uses

- Tossed with other raw vegetables in a salad
- Use butterhead lettuce as wrappers for chicken or tuna salads
- Cook and add lettuce to lasagna, quiches, and casseroles