



# Dark Green Veggies: Lettuce & Leafy Greens

*Serving Equivalents:* 1 cup raw leafy greens = 1/2 cup Vegetable Serving

*Vegetable Subgroups:* Iceberg Lettuce—Other  
Romaine, Boston Bibb, and Spinach—Dark Green

Next to potatoes, lettuce is the second most popular veggie in the United States. And for generations, that lettuce has been iceberg lettuce. However, while many Americans continue to build salads and top sandwiches with iceberg lettuce, others, like Popeye, have begun discovering the benefits of other leafy greens.



The truth is, America's favorite lettuce, **iceberg**, ranks the lowest in nutritional value across the board (96 percent water content will do that!). Turbo-charged spinach, on the other hand, boasts nearly twice the recommended daily value of vitamin K, half the recommended value of vitamin A, and ample amounts of calcium and iron. Similarly, romaine has seven times more vitamin A and C than iceberg lettuce. Clearly, Popeye was onto something.

But what makes this leafy green so healthy? And how should you pick lettuces and greens that will pack the most nutrients into your salads?

**Answer:** Research shows that darker “loose” or “open leaf” lettuces (such as romaine and butterhead) contain more antioxidants and nutrients than the typically lighter-colored, more tightly-packed heads (such as iceberg). The reason? The darker leaves are able to absorb more light and, in turn, synthesize more vitamins. So next time you're choosing lettuce—think **dark!**

Perk up your salad making—more flavor, color, and texture—by mixing in different greens.

- *For a peppery flavor:* arugula or watercress
- *For leaves that aren't green:* red-and-white radicchio
- *For flavor with a "bite":* chicory or escarole
- *For a mild flavor and delicate green color:* Boston or Bibb lettuce
- *For a deep-green color:* Spinach
- *For a crisp crunchy texture:* Romaine



*All lettuces have nutritional value, but not all are created equal. As a general rule, the more colorful the leaf the higher the concentration of nutrients.*

## Iceberg



- While not an unhealthy option, its 94% water content limits its phytonutrient, vitamin, and mineral content. Mixed in with darker greens, however, iceberg lettuce can lead to greater acceptance of these less familiar lettuces and greens.
- Iceberg lettuce is characterized by compact heads, light green color, crisp texture, and delicate flavor.
- Rinse head upon purchase; dry on paper towels. Refrigerate in plastic bag for use within 1 week.

- Romaine lettuce is a darker loose leaf lettuce that is a great alternative to iceberg lettuce and provides a huge dose of vitamin A and a variety of other nutrients.
- It is a crisp head-type lettuce consisting of long, loaf-shaped, narrow leaves ranging in color from dark green outer leaves to greenish-yellow inner leaves.
- Rinse and dry romaine lettuce thoroughly on paper towels. Refrigerate in plastic bag for use within 1 week.



## Boston Bibb



- Although not as nutrient dense as romaine, Boston Bibb's open leaf structure allows this lettuce to provide twice the amount of Vitamins A and C than Iceberg lettuce.
- Also known as Butterhead, Boston bib is a head-type lettuce characterized by broad wavy green outer leaves encompassing more tightly bound yellow tinted inner leaves. It has a sweet mild flavor with a buttery, crisp texture.
- Store washed and dried lettuce in the refrigerator in plastic bag for up to five days.

- Popeye's well-known choice of muscle builder is in fact a powerhouse of vitamin K, Vitamin A, calcium and iron.
- This salad builder is not a lettuce but instead is actually an edible flower. Its dark green smaller leaves grow at the end of thin edible stems. Spinach contributes a delicate texture and relatively sweet flavor to your salad.
- Loosely wrap unwashed spinach in damp paper towel. Refrigerate in plastic bag for use within 3-5 days. Wash well immediately before using.

