

Lesson 2: Leafy Greens

Lesson 2 focuses on the African Heritage Diet Pyramid's foundational food group: leafy greens. One of the many distinguishing characteristics of African heritage cuisine is the abundant use of greens—in soups, stews, salads, and side dishes. Edible leafy greens also happen to be one of the most nutrient-dense foods known.

Students rave about lesson 2. If your students are skeptical about “quick-cooking” greens, worry not! Across the board, students report that they are delighted to find ways to prepare greens that are faster and retain more nutrients.

Like all the recipes in ATOAH, the greens' recipes use the simplest, and yet savory, of ingredients. We have had ATOAH participants who had never smelled fresh dill before. Others who have never eaten an avocado or prepared greens in any way other than “cooked down”. While the ingredients in this class are seemingly basic, they are beginning steps for people who want to embrace more green vegetables and whole foods into their lives. Every ingredient can be exciting to a new cook!

Oldways Tip #1: Display your greens!

A display of leafy greens lights up a room. Having all of your different greens washed and exhibited as students walk in is sure to pique their excitement as well as their appetites. Some teachers like to invite students to taste the variety of greens raw, before cooking, to truly appreciate their nuances; others have enjoyed playing a game of “Name That Green”, in which they ask students to guess each type.

Oldways Tip #2: If Teaching Demo-Style, Prep Whatever You Can Ahead Of Time

If you have the space and equipment to fit in all 5 recipes included in this class, you will want to have as much prepped ahead of time as possible, especially if you teach your class in a demo fashion. Have the garlic, onions, lemon, and dill pre-chopped. This will save you time, allowing you to focus on handling the major food at hand: the greens!

Oldways Tip #3: Address Medical Conditions, Medications, and Leafy Greens. Leafy greens have been acclaimed by nutrition experts because of their extremely high content of vitamins, minerals and other nutrients. While they are considered one of the healthiest foods that we can eat, people that suffer from certain medical conditions and take certain medications do need to be mindful of the kinds of leafy greens they eat and/or limit the amount of leafy greens that they consume in a day. The two major concerns that we have are for those with hypertension who are on blood-thinning medication (or statins) and those that have suffered from kidney stones and oxalosis. We will include a handout addressing both of these topics in the **Greens & Medical Conditions** Teachers Guide sheet.

Tips and Comments from Fellow Teachers

- After washing the greens, I let my students taste them raw, in order for them to experience their natural non-cooked taste. I served a salad of romaine lettuce, mustard & kale greens with Harrissa. They were surprised how flavorful and spicy the salad was without any dressing added.
- This turned out to be our favorite lesson ... The following week, one participant related how much she had used the recipes at home all week, and commented "Now I'm not going to have any problem getting in my vegetables!"
- We divided the class into 3 groups and worked on all 3 recipes at one time. The recipe stations gave participants a sense of ownership. They loved each one of the recipes and continued to make all of them outside of class.
- A couple of participants were pleasantly surprised when they tried the green smoothie. They did not taste the greens.
- The Garlicky Dill Mojo sauce and Green Smoothie were the class favorites. (Definitely bring in a blender if you can!)
- Tasting the subtle differences in the greens was our class' favorite part.
- The easiest part to teach was that greens should be included in most meals, since they are at the base of the pyramid, and so culturally and nutritionally significant.
- We all really enjoyed going over the 10 different ways to incorporate greens into one's diet – omelets, sandwiches, side with dinner, etc.
- "Potlikker" is a great discussion topic. Memories and family recipes were discussed at length in this class.
- I brought in kale chips! If you have time and access to an oven, this is a great addition to the class.

Additional Recipes

[Oldways Flash-Cooked Dandelion Greens](#)

[Oldways Callaloo Soup](#)