Dark green leafy vegetables include spinach, beet greens, Swiss chard, chicory, endive, escarole, dandelion, cress, sorrel, and others. One cup raw spinach provides approximately:

- 180% daily value (DV) of vitamin K.
- 55% DV of vitamin A.
- 15% DV of vitamin C.
- 15% DV of folate.

These greens also contain a variety of minerals, like iron, calcium, magnesium and potassium, and the phytonutrient pigments carotenoids and chlorophyll.

**HOW THEY IMPROVE HEALTH**

- Vitamin K is important for bone health and may play a role in preventing osteoporosis and inflammatory diseases.
- Carotenoids and vitamin A help preserve overall eye health.
- The antioxidants in green leafy vegetables have been suggested to lower the risk of stomach, breast and skin cancers, and cardiovascular disease.

**NUTRIENT AND PHYTONUTRIENT CHANGES**

- Leafy green vegetables have a relatively short shelf life and should be refrigerated. Only chop the greens when ready to use.
- Light cooking (short time, low heat) helps to make the minerals and vitamins A and K more digestible. However, it does cause a decrease in vitamin C.
- When preserving greens, freezing is your best option. Some vitamin C will be lost, but vitamins A and K and the minerals are maintained as long as the drained liquid is also consumed.

*This information is not meant to diagnose, treat, cure, or prevent any disease. This project is made possible by funding through OSU CARES - an initiative of OSU Extension and the OSU to expand faculty, staff and student partnerships with communities throughout Ohio.*
Recipe: Elegant Cheesy Spinach Cakes

(Reprinted with permission from the American Institute for Cancer Research, www.aicr.org)

This recipe uses cooked spinach to increase carotenoid, vitamin K and mineral absorption (the fat in the cheese also helps with this).

Ingredients:
- 12 oz. fresh baby spinach
- 1/2 cup part-skim or low fat ricotta cheese
- 1/4 cup shredded Romano or Parmesan cheese
- 3 large eggs (can substitute 2 large eggs, plus 2 egg whites, beaten)
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- Freshly ground pepper to taste
- Canola oil cooking spray

Directions:
- Preheat oven to 400 degrees F.
- Use food processor and pulse spinach until it is finely chopped, but don't overdo it. Place spinach in bowl. Add cheeses, eggs, garlic and pepper. Stir to combine well.
- Coat 8 "cups" of a muffin pan (1/2 cup size) with cooking spray. Spoon in spinach mixture. Bake 20-22 minutes. Remove pan from oven and let stand 6-7 minutes to allow to firm up. Loosen sides with knife and gently lift out.
- Sprinkle a bit of additional Romano or Parmesan on top (optional) and serve warm.

Makes 8 spinach cakes: 8 appetizers or 4 side dish servings
Per serving (appetizer size): 65 calories, 3.3 g total fat (2 g saturated fat), 3 g carbohydrate, 25 g protein, 0.9 g dietary fiber, 157 mg sodium, 4026 IU vitamin A (81% DV), 200 µg vitamin K (254% DV), 85 µg folate (21% DV), 160 mg calcium (16% DV), 1.3mg iron (7% DV)

For more information or how to maximize nutrients in other fruits and vegetables, see http://localfoods.osu.edu/maximizenutrients.