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News Release

Turnip Green Know How

I have gotten several calls in the last few weeks on preserving turnip greens. It seems folks have quite a bounty in their fall gardens this year and want to know how they can preserve them.

The leafy green tops of the turnip, or turnip greens, as we call them are considered a delicacy in the South and have grown in popularity across the rest of the United States thanks to their assertive flavor and hearty nutritional profile. When you're buying turnip greens, choose ones with consistent color, crisp leaves, and slender stems. They are available from October to March because they produce much better in cooler weather.

The Facts

One cup of cooked turnip greens has 1.2g of protein, 4.4g of carbohydrates and 3.5g of dietary fiber. A cup of turnip greens also has 27mg of vitamin C, 118mcg of folate, 203mg of potassium and 137mg of calcium. In 1 cup of turnip greens, you'll get about 20 calories.

Significance

Turnip greens are a good addition to a healthy diet because they are low in calories, cholesterol, fat and sodium. They can be prepared in a variety of ways, including steaming, blanching and sautéing and can also be used in salads, stews, casseroles or served on their own.

Benefits

Turnip greens contain many nutrients that benefit overall health. Vitamin C in turnip greens helps protect cells in the body from damage by free radicals. Folate helps with the production of new cells and strengthens bones. Potassium helps your body maintain normal kidney function and plays a role in conducting nerve information throughout the body. Calcium helps strengthen bones and teeth.

Considerations

Turnip greens contain calcium oxalates, which can cause health problems if they accumulate and crystallize in the body. If you have a history of gall bladder problems or kidney stones, you may want to avoid turnip greens because of their high oxalate content. The least enjoyable part of preparing fresh greens is washing all of the grit off the leaves, and if this is too much of a chore for you, you may want to purchase pre-washed greens. The easiest way to clean them is in the

sink or a very large pot filled with cold water. After cutting the stems and heavy ribs out, place the leaves down in the water. Let them soak for a few minutes then wash thoroughly to loosen grit and sand; drain. Repeat the process two or three times, or until you have removed all the grit.

Preserving

Turnip greens can be preserved by canning or freezing them. Freezing retains more of the nutrients that may be lost during cooking.

To Freeze: You simply wash thoroughly and blanch for about 5-7 minutes to wilt the leaves. Then cool off quickly, place in freezer safe containers and cover with remaining liquid before putting in freezer.

To Can: Wash thoroughly and blanch 5-7 minutes to wilt the leaves. Put in heated standard canning jars. Cover with hot liquid left from blanching, put on heated lids and screw bands and process in a *pressure canner*. Pints, 70 minutes and quarts, 90 minutes. Please do not pressure can in less time than this because turnip greens are a low acid food and could contain botulism which is very deadly and requires a specific amount of processing time to eliminate.

All greens such as spinach, collard, kale, etc can be preserved in the same manner.

Greens and Cheese Bake

A casserole made with spinach or other greens and mozzarella cheese, along with ricotta cheese, and bread crumbs.

- 1 ½ pounds greens, washed and trimmed (kale, mustard greens, turnip greens, collard greens, or mixed)
- salt and black pepper
- 1 1/2 cups chicken or vegetable broth, divided
- 1 cup half-and-half
- 4 tablespoons butter
- 1/4 cup flour
- 1/3 cup grated Parmesan cheese
- 1/2 cup ricotta cheese (whole milk or part skim)
- 3 tablespoons dry bread crumbs
- 2 ounces Mozzarella cheese, shredded, or about ½ cup

Butter a 1 1/2-quart baking dish or casserole; preheat the oven to 375°. Cut out and discard the tough stems; if using kale or collards, cut out thick center ribs. Rinse all the greens and shake off any excess water, chop them into 1/2-inch pieces. In a large skillet, cook the greens over low heat, adding them by handfuls and stirring them down as they wilt. Add 1/2 cup of chicken broth, then cover the skillet; braise for 10 to 15 minutes, or until tender. Pour off any liquid left in the skillet, then season the greens with salt and pepper. Transfer to a bowl and set aside. Heat the remaining 1 cup of broth and half-and-half in a saucepan, just until bubbles form around the edge of the pan.

In the large skillet, melt the butter over low heat. Add the flour and cook, stirring, for one minute. Add the hot broth mixture all at once and stir over medium heat until the sauce is smooth and thickened. Whisk in the grated Parmesan and ricotta cheeses. Stir the greens into the cheese sauce and pour the mixture into the prepared baking dish. Sprinkle with the bread crumbs and then sprinkle the grated mozzarella over the top; bake for 20 minutes, or until the sauce is bubbling and the mozzarella is melted and lightly browned. Serve immediately. Serves 6.

Recipe Source: About.com Southern Foods

For more information on this topic or for other food preservation information please contact Angela Treadaway, Regional Extension Agent, at the St. Clair County Extension office at (205) 338-9416 at treadas@aces.edu.