Spring is a great time to try all sorts of fresh nutritious greens. Leafy greens are an important addition to a healthy diet. They contain few calories, little fat, no cholesterol, and they taste great. Here are some ideas:

For maximum nutrition and flavor, choose dark-colored greens and add other vegetables like carrots or even fruit for added color, texture, and flavor.

Try mild varieties like spinach, kale, or collard greens and graduate to stronger flavored greens like mustard greens, beet greens, and Swiss chard. Young, tender greens are best for salads. Mature greens can be wilted, braised, steamed, or added to soups or side dishes.

### Spinach Orange Salad
6 cups fresh spinach, torn
2 cups other greens (romaine, escarole, or leaf lettuce)
1-11 ounce can mandarin orange sections, OR 1 cup fresh orange, sliced
1 cup fresh mushrooms, sliced (optional)
1 small red onion, sliced and separated into rings (optional)

In large bowl, combine all the ingredients. Toss with favorite low-calorie dressing or try Dijon or Dill dressing below.

Yield: 8 servings; serving size 1 cup (20 calories; 0 grams fat; 0 mg cholesterol, 20 mg sodium)

#### Dijon Dressing
1/4 cup nonfat mayonnaise
2 Tablespoons Dijon mustard
1 Tablespoon honey
1 Tablespoon cider vinegar
1-1/2 teaspoons vegetable oil
1/8 teaspoon ground red pepper
1 clove garlic, crushed

Combine all ingredients in a small bowl. Whisk mixture vigorously until blended.

Yield: 4 servings; serving size 2 Tablespoons (50 calories, 2 grams fat, 0 mg cholesterol, 190 mg sodium)

#### Dill Weed Dressing
2/3 cup vinegar (red wine or cider)
2 tablespoon oil (olive or canola)
1 tablespoon dried dill weed
1/2 teaspoon dry mustard
1/4 teaspoon pepper

In jar with tight-fitting lid, combine all dressing ingredients; shake well.

Yield: 4 servings; serving size 2 Tablespoons (70 calories, 7 grams fat, 0 mg cholesterol, 0 mg sodium)

### Make Your Own Croutons
Cut enough whole wheat, rye or other bread into 1/2-inch cubes to measure 4 cups. Spread cubes in a 12X8-inch baking dish. Microwave on high 4 to 5 minutes, or until dry to the touch, stirring every 2 minutes. Let stand until cool. Serve. Bag up leftovers for future meals.

Note: Add favorite herbs or seasoning for more flavor.

Croutons can also be toasted in oven or toaster oven. Bake at 375° for 10-15 minutes or until crisp. Stir to brown more evenly.
Food Safety

Separate: Don’t Cross-Contaminate

Cross contamination is the scientific word for how bacteria can be spread from one food product to another. This is especially true when handling raw meat, poultry and seafood, so keep these foods and their juices away from ready-to-eat foods like salad greens.

- Separate raw meat, poultry and seafood from other foods in your grocery shopping cart and in your refrigerator.
- If possible, use one cutting board for raw meat products and another cutting board for fresh vegetables for salads.
- Always wash hands, cutting boards, dishes and utensils with hot soapy water after they come in contact with raw meat, poultry and seafood.

Salad Tips

- Cut a clove of garlic in half and rub salad bowl with it to add flavor.
- Tear greens in bite size pieces rather than cutting with a knife to prevent discoloration of cut edges.
- Remove leaves that are bruised, musty or damaged. Store in a plastic bag in the refrigerator. Use within a week.
- Before cooking or serving greens, wash them in a large bowl of cool water. Do not soak. Dip the greens up and down in the water to remove the sand and dirt from leaves (may need to do several times).
- No matter what you do, wet greens won’t keep and in a matter of days, you’ll have a soggy mess. Instead, separate the leaves, wash and dry them, and then put them away. If you use a salad spinner, you can leave the greens in the basket; pop the lid on and refrigerate the whole thing. If not, roll the washed leaves in paper towels, and refrigerate them in a closed plastic bag.
- Before making the salad, be sure chilled greens are dry; if leaves are wet, dressing may not coat them and flavor may be diluted.
- Most salads are at their best when dressing is added and tossed or mixed just before serving. Dressing can cause greens to become limp and crisp vegetables, croutons, etc. to soften. For calorie control serve salad dressings on the side and add as needed.

Free Nutrition Education Programs

Nutrition staff are available to help limited income families and individuals throughout Herkimer County stretch their food dollars to feed themselves and their families better.

Lessons can take place in participant’s homes or worksites as well as at community centers.

Topics include:
- Stretching food dollars
- Preparing low cost, easy recipes and menus
- Eating healthy and staying active

Contact:
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Stretching Your Salad Dollars

$ Select fruits and vegetables that are in season. They are usually the best price.
$ Choose fresh fruits and vegetables that are firm, full, bright and fresh looking.
$ Amount to buy: One pound of most greens will make 6-10 servings (1/2 cup).
$ Pass up wilted vegetables and overripe fruit, despite low prices.
$ Leftover green peppers or onions may be wrapped and frozen for later use. Double wrap to prevent odor from going through freezer.
$ Try a variety of greens for salads. Look for endive, escarole, spinach and Romaine. The darker the greens, the better for nutritional value.
$ Pre-cut coleslaw cabbage or salad mixtures can be costly items. Look for sales and compare prices. You can save money by preparing your own greens.

Need help paying your grocery bill? Food Stamps can help! Call (315) 894-9917 today. Nutrition Outreach & Education Program Catholic Charities of Herkimer County