

Live Free and Dig

with the Littleton Garden Club

Lacinato Kale

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Littleton Garden Club

Much to our surprise, we discovered that Lacinato Kale (cavolo nero) is delicious when combined with two things we love: garlic and freshly squeezed lemon juice.

A former co-worker posted their favorite recipe on our employee blog and raved about the amazing fresh Italian salad flavor of this recipe. We reluctantly tried it as Kale had not been a vegetable we'd tried. Since that moment ten years ago, this salad recipe has been prepared once every couple of weeks.

Lacinato (pronounced la-chi-NAH-toe) Kale is what makes the recipe work. It's unlike the somewhat chewy and less sweet curly varieties. It's also commonly known as Tuscan, Dragon, or Dinosaur Kale. Its

dark, bumpy texture resembles dinosaur skin, but don't let that stop you!

When slightly massaged and seasoned with olive oil, the leaves magically soften into a savory salad delight. Lacinato Kale is considered a nutritional powerhouse with many antioxidants and almost as much calcium as a glass of milk.

Tuscan Kale is an easy vegetable to grow. It was initially cultivated in the Tuscany region of Italy and is a perfect choice for northern New Hampshire. It likes our cooler temperatures, and the long upright leaves become sweeter into the autumn growing season.

Like other Brassicas, Kale is visited by cabbage worms, grasshoppers, and aphids. Organic plant protection involves suppressing

weeds and hand-removing pests.

Local organic growers feature this Kale as one of their crops. You can pick up a bunch in the summer at the Littleton Farmer's Market. If you want to avoid growing it yourself, it can also be found in the organic section at the grocery store.

Tuscan Kale Salad

One bunch of Lacinato Kale (about 12-14 large leaves)

Juice of 1 ½ lemons

One can of Cannellini beans- rinsed and drained

1-2 garlic cloves grated/finely chopped (cover with the olive oil)

3 Tbs. Extra virgin olive oil

2-3 Tbs. seasoned bread crumbs

¼ to ½ cup grated Pecorino or Parmesan Reggiano cheese

1 ½ tsp. Fresh ground pepper

Wash the Kale thoroughly in a bowl of cold water, changing the water at least twice. Remove large veins.

Massage the leaves a few times, then dry and chop into ribbons. Place in a large bowl.

Pour the lemon juice, olive oil, and garlic over the leaves and let it rest for a few minutes.

Combine beans, bread crumbs, cheese, and pepper and gently toss the salad.

Note: This dish pairs well with Ciabatta bread and brushetta or a few crackers. Baby spinach leaves may be substituted for Kale for those who don't want to try it.

For more information about the club and our meetings, please visit www.littletonnhgardenclub.org.