

A Guide To Greens From *Here & Now* Resident Chef Kathy Gunst

Kathy's Note: Like fine wine, the best salads have a balance of flavors and aromas. A mixture of sweet, tender leaves and juicy, crispy greens, balanced by bitter and peppery lettuces is ideal. When you see a new type of green, be sure to try it. Mix and match. Experiment.

Here are some of the most popular types of greens:

1. **Arugula** (also called Rocket or Roquette), with its peppery bite and sweet undertones, has become a superstar with chefs and home cooks. Many people find it positively spicy. The long, dark green arrow-shaped leaves grow in the spring and early summer, with a late fall crop as well. New to the market is micro arugula, with tiny (2- to 3-inch) leaves that look like sprouts but pack a big flavor. Wild arugula, also called *Sylvestra*, has a stronger, sharper flavor than cultivated arugula and can be found in specialty shops. Arugula can be used raw in salads and sandwiches, added to soups, stews, and pasta sauces (where it wilts and adds a peppery flavor), or can be fully cooked in stir-fries, and sauces.
2. **Bibb Lettuce** is exceptionally sweet, with a tender texture and a subtle, light crunch.
3. **Black Seeded Simpson** is a spring variety of crinkly light green lettuce that adds a juicy quality to salads.
4. **Blushed Butter Cob**, a cross between romaine and butterhead lettuce, has the crisp texture of romaine leaves with the buttery, melt-in-your-mouth flavor of butterhead. This is a particularly beautiful green as it's "blushed" with bright red streaks.
5. **Buttercrunch** may sound like candy, but in this case it's a dark green, fan-shaped leaf that is exceptionally tender with no bitterness.
6. **Chicory** adds a slightly bitter flavor and crunchy texture to salads and sautés.
7. **Curly Cress or Peppercress** are small, sprout-like greens (much like a mini watercress) that are peppery, crunchy, full of flavor and rich in vitamins.
8. **Curly Endive**, sometimes mistakenly referred to as chicory, has loose heads of lacy, green-rimmed leaves that curl at the tip and a pleasing, mild bitter flavor.
9. **Dandelion Greens** have an intense, bitter, earthy flavor. Their jagged-edged leaves can be found wild or cultivated.
10. **Endive, Belgian Endive, or French Endive:** There are essentially three types of endive. Belgian endive can be tricky to grow, because in order to get the crunchy, open cigar-shaped white leaves it must be cultivated in darkness and never exposed to open sunlight. Endive adds a great crunch and slight peppery flavor to salads; it also makes a wonderful natural container for dips and spreads.
11. **Escarole**, an Italian favorite, with a broad green leaf and a mild flavor, is usually cooked before eating: braised, slowly sautéed, or added to soups.
12. **Frisée**, a member of the chicory family, is pale yellow-green with frizzy, curly leaves. It is a key element in mesclun mixtures, and it's the classic green used in bistro salads, frequently served topped with a poached egg and cubes of bacon. It has a mild bitter flavor.
13. **Green Oakleaf** is a tender, crispy dark green lettuce that adds great flavor and texture to a mixed salad. Its fan-shaped leaves have no bitterness. Also look for Red Oakleaf or Red Leaf Lettuce, another sweet, beautifully colored lettuce.
14. **Iceberg**, the classic American lettuce leaf, has been overlooked recently due to the ever-expanding new world of exotic greens. But iceberg adds a juicy crunch to salads. It can also be used as a natural wrap for sautéed vegetables and poultry.

15. **Komatsuna** provides a delicate mustard flavor. The broad, rich, tender green leaves look a bit like baby spinach, and are full of flavor and calcium.
16. **Little Gem**, a type of crunchy Romaine leaf, has a sweet flavor with densely wrapped leaves.
17. **Lolo Rosso and Red Lollo Rosso** are frilly green leaves, often tinged with dark red edges that add great texture, color, and sweet flavor to salad bowls.
18. **Mache** (also called Lamb's Lettuce or Corn Salad) has been cultivated for centuries and has long been popular throughout Europe. Mache is prized for its sweet, nutty flavor and soft, buttery texture. A favorite in mesclun salad mixes (see below), it is loaded with vitamins A and C, and iron.
19. **Mesclun Salad Mix** is the new iceberg. Suddenly it is in every supermarket and served at the most ordinary restaurants. Ideally mesclun mix combines a variety of greens, balancing color, shape, texture, and flavor. Most mesclun mixes combine arugula, mustard greens, and spicy curly cress with a romaine-type lettuce and tender butterhead lettuce.
20. **Mustard Greens** are robust and spicy and come in a wide assortment of colors, shapes, and flavors. They have spiny leaves with ruffled edges. Mustard greens grow best in cooler weather (some varieties are even winter hardy). They are delicious braised or sautéed. Mizuna is a favorite variety.
21. **Purslane** adds a great zesty, sour and tangy flavor and great crunch to salads. It is supposed to have the highest known plant source of omega-3 fatty acids, not to mention that it's quite high in vitamin C. You may have tasted purslane in a traditional Greek salad.
22. **Radicchio**, or red chicory, is a variety of Italian lettuce that adds a wonderfully sharp, bitter flavor to salads. Its colors range from pale whitish pink to deep maroon.
23. **Romaine** offers long, crisp light green leaves that have a subtly sweet flavor. It is the classic lettuce used in Caesar salads.
24. **Sorrel** is frequently found growing wild in lawns or fields in spring and again in late fall. It adds a tart, intensely lemony flavor to salads, soups, and stir-fries – a little bit goes a long way.
25. **Spinach** can be found in many shapes and sizes, but good spinach is always tender, delicate, and has an almost melt-in-your-mouth, buttery quality. Baby spinach is becoming increasingly popular and available in American markets and is worth seeking out because of its exceptionally tender leaves and the fact that it doesn't absorb water the way regular, full-grown spinach leaves do.
26. **Tatsoi** is a green Asian leaf with a mild flavor that makes an interesting addition to salads and stir-fries.
27. **Watercress** has a delicious peppery bite that adds a crunchy texture and lively flavor to salads, sandwiches (think tea sandwiches), and soups (many Asian soups add watercress at the very end of cooking). It is also delicious stir-fried with a touch of fresh chopped ginger. Watercress, which likes a wet environment and grows near cool ponds and stream banks, as well as in the garden, has an edible stem and rounded green leaves.