

**Healthy Bytes Initiative Article**

**Aug 2022 Endive**

****

**Health Benefits of Endive**

**By Stephanie Polizzi, MPH, RDN**

Endive is a leaf vegetable that include several species including curly endive or frisée and broad leaf heads called escarole or Belgian endive. This document highlights the nutrition in the curly endive variety.

Curly endive has narrow stems and curly leaves. The outer leaves are deep to pale green and the stems are usually light yellow to white. The outer greens have a slightly bitter flavor and crisp texture and the inner leaves have a milder flavor. Wilting or sautéing will mellow bitterness. Because of its slight bitterness, endive is often used in salads to brighten up the flavor profile and add color variety. Endive is usually grown in summer and fall but likes cooler temperatures making it ideal for growing year-round in Oregon if protected from frost. Plants flourish in standard soil or in pots.

Like other greens, endive contains several antioxidants including beta-carotene and vitamins C and K. Vitamin K helps make proteins required for blood clotting and the building of bones. Endive is also a source of polyphenol antioxidants that protect against heart disease and folate in greens supports the development of DNA and RNA.

Endive contains a powerful flavonoid called *kaempferol*, which works as an antioxidant by protecting against free radicals that promote cancer development. Studies have shown that kaempferol inhibits certain types of cancer, such as those found in the breast, bone, cervix, and more. Kaempferol works by inducing the death of tumor cells and reducing inflammation without negatively impacting healthy cells. Kaempferol also has antimicrobial and antidiabetic properties, and protects the heart and brain. Endives also contain beta-carotene which gives plants their color and also functions as an antioxidant in the prevention of diseases like heart disease, cancer and diabetes.

Endive contains minerals like manganese which plays a role in metabolism, bone formation, the immune response and works with vitamin K in blood clotting. Potassium in endive helps regulate blood pressure. Endive also contains small amounts of magnesium, calcium, iron, zinc, copper and phosphorus.

Fiber in endive can help reduce constipation, hemorrhoids, and aid in weight control. Plus, endive is very low in Calories.

Curly endive is in peak season spring through late summer/early fall but can usually be found year-round at grocery stores. Look for endive as part of pre-packaged salad mixes or seek out fresh greens in bulk or at farmers’ markets. Due to its distinct color, shape, and texture, endive is easy to spot. Leaves should be crisp and free of browning. Both the leaves and stems are edible and nutritious.

Endive can be stored unwashed in a plastic bag and placed in the refrigerator for about ten days. Rinse in cold water and pat dry with a paper towel right before using. Wilted or slimy leaves indicate that the endive is spoiled and unusable. Add acid dressings with vinegar or lemon juice just before serving to prevent wilting.

The most common use of endive is mixed with other salad greens. Its leaves can be easily torn instead of chopped, making it a great ingredient to use in kid-friendly recipes. Because of its slightly bitter flavor, it pairs well with sweet fruit like oranges or strawberries. Add to sandwiches or sauté with onions and white beans for a hearty side dish.