

# Health Benefits of Dandelions



Despite the bad reputation of dandelions being an invasive weed, they have been used for centuries for their healing properties. Native to Asia and Europe, ancient cultures used the dandelion to create tonics and teas used to treat digestive issues. Some sources indicate the dandelion arrived in the Americas at the time of the Mayflower.

All parts of the dandelion plant are edible, including the flowers, leaves and roots. Some plants that look like dandelions (Cat's Ear or Sow Thistle) may not have the same nutrition benefits but are also safe to consume

## WHAT MAKES DANDELIONS GREAT?

### Greens

1 cup raw dandelion greens provides 25 calories, 1.5 gm protein, 2 gm fiber, no fat and no cholesterol.

Like other salad greens, dandelion greens are rich in antioxidants vitamins A and C, which fight inflammation. Vitamin K is essential for healthy blood clotting and building bone. Folate is required for DNA synthesis and protecting against anemia. They are a popular ingredient in Italian and Greek soups, pesto and fresh salads.

Similar to arugula, the greens have a slightly bitter, tangy taste. The bitter compound aids digestion and may help prevent certain types of cancer.

Greens also contribute calcium and magnesium for bones, teeth and muscle contraction. Potassium in greens helps lower high blood pressure.

### Flowers

Dandelion flowers are sweeter than greens and make a colorful addition to fresh salads. The yellow color indicates the presence of lutein, an antioxidant that boosts eye health.

### Roots

Dandelion roots can be eaten like carrots, fresh or boiled, roasted or steamed. They contain a fiber called inulin, that helps regulate blood sugars, lower cholesterol and feed healthy gut microbiota.



## BUYING & USING DANDELIONS

True dandelions have yellow blooms that grow on a single, leafless stem. The lobed leaves grow from the bottom of the stem and produce a milky sap. Be sure to select dandelions that grow away from animal use or car exhaust, and have not been treated with herbicides or pesticides. Clean the plant thoroughly by soaking and rinsing several times in fresh water to remove grit, sand and bugs.

Dandelions can be harvested at any time but are most tender in early spring. Large leaves with fewer lobes as less bitter. Massaging fresh greens with lemon juice will remove bitterness to make a nutritious addition to fresh salads. Greens can also be blanched, steamed or sauteed to remove bitterness.

Flowers can be used whole in salads, or petals can be removed and added to muffins, pancakes or porridge. Dip flowers in batter and fry for fritters or tempura. Since they are relatively sweet, flowers are often used to make jelly, honey or vinegar.

Dandelion roots are fibrous and stringy, and more easily extracted from wet soil. Scrub the soil from the root with fingers or brush. Chop and toss raw into salads, soups or stews. Typically, roots are dried, roasted and ground into powder to be used as a tea or coffee substitute. Dandelion root powder can also be found at specialty grocers or health food stores.



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## Dandelion Greens & Beans Skillet

Runningtothekitchen.com

### Ingredients:

1 Tbsp olive oil  
 ½ red onion, sliced  
 3 cloves garlic, minced  
 1 Tbsp fresh Thyme leaves  
 Pinch of ground nutmeg  
 1 large bunch dandelion greens, washed, chopped  
 1 can (15 oz) cannellini beans, drained  
 1 can (15 oz) red kidney beans, drained  
 2 Tbsp balsamic vinegar  
 Salt and pepper to taste

### Directions:

1. Place oil in skillet and add onions. Sauté 5 minutes. Add garlic, thyme, nutmeg to onion and cook 1 minute.
2. Add dandelion greens, cover and cook 5 minutes. Then add beans and cook 3 minutes more.
3. Remove from heat. Add balsamic vinegar and toss.
4. Serve with salt and pepper to taste.

## Dandelion Greens Salad

Adapted from Forksoverknives.com

### Ingredients:

2 raw beets with greens  
 1 bunch raw asparagus spears, chopped  
 4 cups raw dandelion greens, coarsely chopped  
 1 can (15 oz) chickpeas (garbanzo beans), drained  
 1 tsp Dijon mustard  
 1 tsp maple syrup  
 3 Tbsp vinegar of choice  
 1 tsp fresh thyme (optional)  
 Salt and pepper to taste

### Directions:

1. Remove beet greens and chop for salad. Grate or chop beet root.
2. Add greens, beets and asparagus to large bowl.
3. Mix vinegar, mustard and syrup and add to salad. Toss to coat.
4. Top with chickpeas and sprinkle with thyme.
5. Serve with salt and pepper to taste.

## Dandelion Root Cake

Adapted from Adamantkitchen.com

### Ingredients:

1¾ cups flour	2 tsp cinnamon
2 tsp baking powder	½ tsp nutmeg
1 tsp baking soda	1/8 tsp cloves
½ cup honey	½ tsp salt
¾ cup oil or margarine	3 cups peeled, shredded dandelion roots
3 eggs*	
1 Tbsp vanilla	

\*substitute 1 Tbsp flax with 3 Tbsp water for each egg

### Directions:

1. Grate the roots and soak in water at least 1 hour or overnight. Drain.
2. Mix dry ingredients in large bowl. Mix wet ingredients separately and stir into dry. Then mix in dandelion roots. Pour mixture into 2 9-inch baking pans and bake at 350° for 25-35 minutes.
3. Top with frosting or a sprinkle of powdered sugar.

## Dandelion Leaf Pesto

Susancooksvegan.com

### Ingredients:

4 cups dandelion leaves  
 1/3 cup nutritional yeast  
 ½ cup nuts of choice (walnuts, almonds, pecans)  
 1 cloves garlic, chopped  
 1 Tbsp lemon juice  
 1 tsp lemon zest  
 2-3 Tbsp olive oil (more if necessary)  
 ½ tsp salt

### Directions:

1. Place all ingredients in a food processor or blender. Add oil 1 tbsp at a time. Additional or water can be used to thin consistency.
2. Serve over pasta shells or noodles. Garnish with dandelion flower.

## REFERENCES

USDA National Nutrient Database

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