

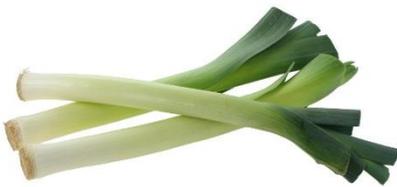
MINUTE NUTRITION NEWS

August 2017

Eating Local and Seasonal: Leeks

By Lisa Lau, Registered Dietitian at the Georgina Nurse Practitioner Led Clinic

August is the beginning of peak leek season in Ontario, which lasts until November. However, thanks to their relatively long storage life after the last harvest of the season, leeks remain available up until February. Local vegetables aren't plentiful during the winter when one lives in Ontario, so leeks offer a great option for us to help keep up with our vegetable intake.



Nutritional Goodness

Leeks provide a variety of nutrients beneficial for our health, including fibre, vitamins A, B6, C, and K, as well as folate and iron.

Introduction to Leeks

The leek is a vegetable that originated in Middle Asia, which then have travelled its way towards the Mediterranean countries. Today, it is a common vegetable used in Europe, particularly in British and Northern European cuisines. There is a classic recipe called *Vichyssoise*, which is a cold-served creamy leek and potato soup that some people believe to have originated in France.



If you are not familiar with using leeks, it is fairly simple to work with. The roots at the very base of the white stalk should be trimmed off. Then cut off the uppermost part of the green leaves that are tough (these can be saved for making stocks). Cut down the middle of the leek to separate it in half (see photo above). If a recipe calls for the leek to stay intact, you may choose to only cut halfway down the leek. Rinse the halves under running water, making sure to get the dirt out from between the layers. Then the leek is ready for cooking. If your recipe requires smaller chunks of leeks, then chop the halves in shorter pieces as desired.



Recipe Ideas

The most common use for leeks in North America is perhaps in soups and stocks. Leeks carry a mild onion-like taste and is great for adding flavour and bringing a natural sweetness to soup and stock recipes. A quick search online will reveal many combinations of creamy or pureed leek and vegetable soups with ingredients such as potatoes, sweet potatoes, cauliflower, broccoli, parsnip and mushrooms.

Another easy way to use leeks is to braise, roast or sauté it. Roast or braise the leeks in its halves after washing, or chop it up into shorter pieces for sautéing. Cook the leeks on its own with a bit of extra virgin olive oil and a dash of salt and pepper, or try pairing it with other vegetables that you like. You can also use leeks in your existing recipes to replace onions, shallots, or green onions as they have a similar flavour profile. Pasta dishes, salads, casseroles, and even quiche are great recipes to try this.

RECIPE OF THE MONTH

August 2017

Vichyssoise Soup

Classic Vichyssoise is a leek and potato soup that is served cold – a perfect summer appetizer. This version of the recipe creates a lower carb alternative that makes it a more diabetes-friendly soup.

Make this ahead of time and refrigerate up to a day before serving. Pair it with a nice green salad topped with some healthy proteins (think salmon, walnuts, sunflower seeds or even a boiled egg) and you've got yourself a refreshing, balanced summer meal.



Makes about 8 cups

Ingredients:

1 tbsp.	butter
1 tbsp.	extra virgin olive oil
1	sweet onion, chopped
3	leeks, white and light green parts only, chopped
2	Russet potatoes, peeled and diced
5 cups	cauliflower florets (about ½ large head)
½ tsp	salt
900mL	chicken broth, no salt added
1 cup	2% milk
	pepper to taste
	chives to garnish

Directions:

1. Heat butter and olive oil in a pot over medium high heat.
2. Add chopped onions and leeks and sauté until soft.
3. Add diced potatoes and cauliflower florets. Season with salt and pepper. Sauté for a few minutes.
4. Add chicken broth and bring to a boil. Once boiling, reduce heat to medium and simmer for 20 minutes or until potatoes and cauliflower become soft.
5. Use an immersion hand blender to puree the soup. (Alternatively, you can transfer small batches of the soup to a food processor to puree the soup.)
6. Slowly add milk while stirring it evenly into the soup. Less milk can be added if a thicker consistency and stronger flavours are desired.
7. Garnish with chives before serving. Serve this soup hot or cold according to preference.

Nutrition information (Per cup):

170 calories, Carbohydrate 28 g (10% DV), Fibre 4 g (14%), Sugars 8 g (includes 0 g added sugars), Fat 4 g (5% DV), Protein 5 g, Sodium 220 mg (10% DV), Calcium 6%, Iron 6%, Potassium 15%