

# LETTUCE



**LETTUCE** was first cultivated in about 4500 B. C. and is believed to be native to the Mediterranean. Today, the most popular cold vegetable in the U.S., lettuce grows in hundreds of varieties throughout the world. There are four main types of lettuce grown in this country. Crisphead, or Iceberg, was renamed in the 1920s when it was transported under mounds of ice. Butterhead, named for its tender texture, includes Boston and Bibb varieties. Romaine, or Cos, is an oblong, dark, and crunchy lettuce best known for its place in Caesar salads. Finally, Leaf, such as Green leaf or Red leaf lettuce grows with leaves that branch from a single stalk in a loose bunch rather than a tight head. The term mesclun describes a blend of mixed greens combined for their variety of texture, flavor and color. Lettuce is available from May to October in the Northeast.

## STORAGE

- ◆ **Refrigerate** washed-and-dried greens **wrapped in a damp cloth or paper towel** in the refrigerator drawer.
- ◆ Iceberg lettuce will last for up to 2 weeks, romaine for about 10 days, and butterhead and leaf will last for 3-4 days if stored this way.

## PREPARATION

- ◆ Rinse lettuce in very cold water just before serving. Pat dry with a clean towel or spin dry with a salad spinner. **Drying helps salad dressing cling to the leaves** rather than sink to the bottom of the salad bowl.
- ◆ Revive limp leaves by immersing in ice water for a few minutes.
- ◆ Add lettuce to sandwiches for **extra flavor and crunch**.
- ◆ Mix different types of lettuce to add a variety of color and texture.
- ◆ **Be creative!** Add raw, steamed or sauteed vegetables, pasta, or tofu to a bowl of lettuce. Make a salad meatier by adding a whole grain like brown rice or different beans such as kidney, garbanzo, fava, or another favorite.

### **Nutritional Information**

Darker green leaves generally have more nutrients than lighter leaves. Most lettuce is high in vitamins A, C, K and folate. Vitamin A is important in vision, growth and development, skin health, immune function and reproduction. Vitamin C is important in immune response, wound healing, and allergic reactions. Vitamin C also helps with iron absorption. Vitamin K is involved in blood clotting. A healthy diet with enough folate may reduce a woman's risk of having a child with certain birth defects of the brain or spinal chord.

# Lettuce Recipes

## Red-leaf Lettuce with Shallot Vinaigrette (Serves 6)

- 2 shallots, minced
- 3 teaspoons white-wine vinegar
- 3 teaspoons Dijon mustard
- 4 Tablespoons olive oil
- Salt and pepper to taste
- 1 large head red-leaf lettuce



In small bowl, combine shallot and vinegar and let stand 10 minutes. Whisk in mustard, oil, salt and pepper until blended. Tear lettuce into bite-size pieces and toss with shallot vinaigrette.

Recipe adapted from Gourmet Magazine, September, 1999 posted on [www.epicurious.com](http://www.epicurious.com) 2003.

## Lettuce Soup

- 1 large head of lettuce (washed and torn into pieces)
- 2 cups milk
- 2 cups vegetable or chicken stock
- 2 Tablespoons butter
- 3 Tablespoons rice
- 1/4 cup lemon juice



In a pot, melt butter. When foam subsides add lettuce leaves, saute on low heat until leaves are wilted. Add stock, milk and rice. Bring to a near boil. Allow soup to cool then transfer to a blender and blend until smooth. Return soup to pot and bring to a boil. Add lemon juice and simmer for 5 minutes. Serve immediately or refrigerate overnight so the soup can develop full flavor. Enjoy hot or cold.

Recipe adapted 1st Traveler's Choice Internet Cookbook at [www.virtualcities.com](http://www.virtualcities.com). Copyright 2002 by ONS Inc.

## Romaine Salad with Chives and Blue Cheese (Makes 6 servings)

- 1 large head of romaine lettuce, torn into bite-size pieces
- 3 Tablespoons olive oil
- 2 1/2 Tablespoons fresh lemon juice
- 1 shallot
- 1 1/2 teaspoon Dijon mustard
- 1 bunch fresh chives, cut into 1 1/2 inch long pieces
- 1 cup crumbled blue cheese
- 1/2 cup roasted walnuts (optional)



Place lettuce in large bowl. In a small bowl whisk oil, lemon juice, shallot, and mustard. Season dressing to taste with salt and pepper. Stir in chives. Drizzle dressing over lettuce and toss to coat. Sprinkle cheese and walnuts over salad and serve.

Recipe adapted from Bon Appetit, March 2002 posted on [www.epicurious.com](http://www.epicurious.com) 2003.