

HARVEST of the MONTH in the CLASSROOM



SALAD GREENS

HISTORY

The first documented cultivation of lettuce appeared in ancient Egyptian tomb paintings over 6,000 years ago. Salads have been celebrated since ancient times, in fact, a Greek proverb references salad greens, "Eat cress and gain wit." The earliest salads were wild greens and herbs seasoned with salt. Salad greens are the first vegetables available in spring. Most leafy vegetables that can be eaten raw are used: all varieties of lettuce, garden cress and watercress, endives, cabbage, spinach, escarole, romaine, and arugula. Lettuce is a member of the family Asteraceae, along with artichokes, marigolds, and sunflowers. It is native to the eastern Mediterranean region and has over 100 different varieties. Arugula is a spicy, mustard-like plant. It is a member of one of the dominant families in our food system: Brassicaceae. Spinach is native to Persia (now Iran) where it was known as aspanakh. Spinach arrived in Europe in the 11th century when it was brought to Spain by the Moors (Muslims). In fact, spinach was known as "the Spanish vegetable" in England.

FUN FACTS

Spinach originated in ancient Persia. It was brought to China in the 7th Century. Today, it is known in China as the "Persian Green."

Arugula is nicknamed "salad rocket", which comes from the Latin word eruca, meaning caterpillar. This is because of their hairy stems.

During the Middle Ages, spinach leaves were sold in the form of round balls, called espinoche.

Many ancient Greeks believed that lettuce made you sleepy so they served it at the end of the meal.

FARMER BIO



Farmer Diego Izarry-Gerould of Spring Sparrow Farm grows salad mix, lettuce, kale, tomatoes, carrots, garlic, herbs, radishes, turnips, and scallions all on 8/10ths of an acre. Spring Sparrow Farm sells through a CSA (Community Supported Agriculture), to local grocery stores, bakeries, and restaurants. His favorite crop to grow is carrots because, "a fresh, well-grown carrot in good soil tastes incredible." Diego was inspired to be a farmer while taking a permaculture course in college. In 2017, he had the opportunity to lease land and start farming on his own, and he jumped at the chance! His advice for future farmers is to, "get hands-on experience. No amount of study beats direct experience."

WHAT PART OF THE PLANT DO WE EAT?

Grades 3-5 • 60 minutes



SALAD GREENS

OBJECTIVES

Students will use google my maps, atlases and/or globes to explore the varied geography of salad.

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

Does every country in the world have a salad?
Where did leafy greens originate?
How does our food travel the world?

MA STATE FRAMEWORK(S)

- 4-TI (Geography and map skills)

MATERIALS NEEDED

Internet access
Google Maps, atlases or globes
Blank map templates

PROCEDURE

Warm Up: Discussion

Discuss with your students the following questions:

1. What are the different kinds of leafy greens we eat? (lettuce, spinach, arugula).
2. Why are salad greens healthy? (low in calories, low in fat, high in protein, fiber, iron, calcium).
3. Are all salads the same?
4. What is a list of possible salad components?
5. Are there any salads that come from specific countries or regions in the world that anyone can share?

Activity: Mapping

Read the text on the geography of salad, and use google my maps to locate and pin the country or region of these salads from around the world. You could also do this activity with a map template, or a hand drawn map.

EXTENSIONS & VARIATIONS

Taste test: When we think of salad greens, we often just think of lettuce, but there are a lot of different varieties of greens and other leaves that we eat. Show students examples of common mixed greens, and pass around a leaf for observation and a taste test. Share words to describe flavors and colors.