

VEGETABLE OF THE WEEK

SWISS CHARD

Swiss chard has expansive, pocketed leaves with stems in a spectrum of colors: red, white, green, yellow. It is actually in the beet family but doesn't develop a bulb. Its leaves are more tender and delicate than other greens. Eat small leaves raw in salads and blanch or steam larger leaves. You can freeze chard for recipes later.

To store: Keep dry, unwashed greens in a sealed plastic bag in the refrigerator up to 2 weeks.

Substitutes: spinach, beet greens, kale

Handling: Wash leaves in basin of lukewarm water to remove grit. Remove the thicker stems by folding the leaves down the center and cutting out the stem. Stack several leaves on top of each other and slice into 1-inch wide ribbons.

To cook: Add uncooked greens to a mixed green salad. Steam stem pieces 8-10 minutes, and leaves 4-6 minutes. Or saute greens until tender in a covered pot or large sauté pan with olive oil, a pinch of salt, and garlic or onion. Watch for color to brighten as this signals they are done. Serve cooked chard alone as a side dish or use them in soup or with pasta, beans, rice, or potatoes. Chard also goes great in stir-fries or in any recipe calling for spinach.

To freeze: Blanch washed greens for 2-3 minutes. Rinse in cold ice water to stop the cooking. Drain and freeze.

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