



Kevin Milaeger

# Milaeger's

## Kale! Kale! The Greens Are Here!

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**I was recently shocked** when I watched a TV commercial (of a forgotten product) that suggested that kale was the next thing to inedible. It implied that no one in their right mind would eat it, and it further intoned that

everyone was aware of this "fact" and pretty much agreed with it. Now, I know kale is sometimes described as being "bitter," but I think that is when it is picked at the wrong time or prepared wrong. Preparation is everything with kale, just like many other foods. Is this a problem? I think most foods taste poorly if they are prepared incorrectly, no? Like most things, if you follow instructions, things usually work out okay.

photo credit: www.burpee.com



**Dinosaur Kale**

Apparently the makers of the commercial are unaware of kale's place in today's healthy cooking. In the current climate of health awareness, kale has emerged as a frontrunner.

According to the "World's Healthiest Foods" website, kale is

"one of the healthiest vegetables around." In the book "Eating on the Wild Side," Jo Robinson says "all kale varieties are good sources of cancer-fighting, heart protective glucosinolates." Plus, they have "high antioxidant

value, with red-leaved varieties higher than green-leaved." In "The Edible Front Yard," kale is described as "a vegetable superstar and the darling of fine food circles," and "a must for the edible garden." Kudos to kale are numerous.



**Red Russian Kale ready to plant**

There are many types of kale. Some have frilly leaves, and others are smooth, more like collards. Coloring can vary too; most are some shade of green especially blue-green,

but quite a few have some pinkish red highlights. One favorite is the so called "Dinosaur Kale," also known as "lacinato" in seed catalogs. (Other

common names are Tuscan Kale and Black Kale.) The elongated, dark gray-green leaves have a reptilian texture, especially when they get large (but you should have picked them when small.) 'Dino' is reputed to be sweeter and milder than other types; it also has more phytonutrients than any other kale. 'Red Russian,' a frilly type with bold coloring, is another favorite because it is both beautiful and nutritious. All kale is edible, but the varieties known as "ornamental" kale are decidedly less toothsome. They can be used as a colorful garnish, but a dinner guest unfamiliar with it might try it and decide your dinner is less than tasty.



Kale is easy to grow and can be grown as a spring or fall crop. Fall is perhaps more ideal since most people feel the flavor improves as the



greens newly planted (above)  
greens 10 days old (below)



weather cools. Some say it is best after a light frost, when the bitterness that is common in some varieties is reduced. The harvest can sometimes be extended well into November. (Our average first frost date is October 17.)

I like to harvest the young kale leaves. If you pick the outer leaves when they are small, they taste better, and the plant will keep on producing more leaves. The cut leaves last a long time in the fridge. Of course there are plenty of recipes featuring kale on the web. Most of them are for salads, soups, stir-fries, and pasta dishes. We offered a kale salad in our café earlier this year (pictured above.) It was very popular---[here is a link to the recipe](#). Keep in mind that kale is most nutritious when served fresh, not cooked. But even cooked, it is

far better than many other foods. I've read more than once that the best way to cook it is steam it or sauté it with olive oil, just long enough so it wilts. Note: I always remove the midrib of the kale leaf as it is usually stringy, especially on larger leaves.

We are now offering



young kale plants for your garden. They are part of our fall "Greens to Grow" program, which also includes other greens like colorful lettuces, broccoli and others. All are easy to grow. We have them at both stores and at the Kenosha Farmer's Market on Saturdays.



Although I was bellyaching earlier in the season about the cool weather and



**A day's harvest from six plants**

any questions or comments.

its effects on the fruit production of heat loving crops, it seems I am now inundated with tomatoes. I think the recent surge in temperatures is responsible, and I couldn't be happier. I like to give the extra tomatoes as hostess gifts, and to guests who come to my house.

And speaking of tomatoes, don't forget that Tomatomania is coming up in about a week----Saturday, September 6 at our Racine store. This is a fun and free event; everyone has a great time. There will be over 140 kinds of tomatoes to try, and over forty kinds of peppers. Plus lots of other tasty treats! [Click here for event details.](#)

Please email me ([kevin@milaegers.com](mailto:kevin@milaegers.com)) if you have