

## **The Family Plot- Grilled Lettuce**

### ***Grilled Romaine***

1 heart of Romaine lettuce

1 tsp. olive oil

Salt and pepper

#### **Directions:**

1. Wash and dry Romaine lettuce.
2. Slice Romaine heart in half.
3. Place cut-side down on an oiled grill or George Foreman grill. Close the lid and cook for 2-3 minutes. Open the grill, flip the lettuce, and grill for another 2 minutes. Don't leave it on for too long or it will become soggy.
4. Place the romaine cut-side up on a plate. Sprinkle with salt and pepper to taste, then add your favorite toppings such as bacon and blue cheese or balsamic vinaigrette and sunflower seeds. Serve immediately.

#### **More About Lettuce:**

##### **General Classifications of Lettuce**

***Crisp Head*** or Iceberg is the most common type of lettuce seen in America. It has little flavor or nutritional value but lots of cool crunch. Iceberg that's unwashed and stored in a plastic bag in the fridge will keep for up to two weeks — twice as long as most other kinds. Look for firm, densely packed heads that are heavy for their size. Look for pale green, almost whitish heads that are tightly packed and feel heavy for their size.

***Butter Head*** has small, round, loosely formed heads and soft, supple leaves that bruise easily. These lettuces grow in loose, pale green to pale yellow heads. Boston and Bibb are the most common varieties. Both require gentle handling, so never chop these leaves but tear them by hand. The sweet taste and cup-shaped leaves make them perfect for wraps or makes pretty beds for tuna, crab, or other salads.

***Leaf Lettuce*** consists of loose leaves that branch from a single stalk. For this reason, leaf lettuce is generally more perishable than head varieties; you'll often see it in "baby lettuce" mixes because of its tenderness. Look for crisp leaves with no brown edges. Leaf lettuces have more flavor than head lettuces. To avoid instant wilting, postpone dressing leaf lettuce until just before serving. Red leaf has a burgundy tint and mild flavor, similar to that of Green leaf. Oak leaf is spicier and nuttier than green leaf.

***Romaine Lettuce*** has long, slightly bitter leaves and sturdy, sweeter center ribs. Romaine provides a robust crunch to any meal. Look for dark green outer leaves that lighten toward the center. Grocery stores have recently started selling packages of hearts of romaine.

### Nutritional Benefits of Lettuce

The nutritional value of lettuce varies with the variety. Lettuce, in general, provides small amounts of dietary fiber, some carbohydrates, a little protein, and a trace of fat. Its most important nutrients are vitamin A and potassium. The vitamin A comes from beta carotene. The darker green, the more beta carotene.

According to the American Cancer Institute and the American Cancer Society, foods rich in vitamin A and C (antioxidants) offer protection against some forms of cancer.

Lettuce, except iceberg, is also a moderately good source of vitamin C, calcium, iron, and copper. The spine and ribs provide dietary fiber, while vitamins and minerals are concentrated in the delicate leaf portion.

### Preparing and Serving Lettuce

Rinse lettuce in very cold water just before serving. Pat dry with a clean towel. Limp leaves can be revived by immersing in ice water for a few minutes. Tear lettuce leaves into pieces. If practical, do not cut or sliced lettuce leaves in advance. Damaged cut lettuce leaves release an ascorbic acid oxidase, which destroys vitamin C. Cut edges also discolor quickly.

Dry leaves before serving. Salad dressing will cling to dry lettuce leaves instead of sinking to the bottom of the salad bowl. Toss with your favorite dressing just before serving (or serve dressing on the side). Lettuce leaves covered with dressing will quickly wilt.

### Storing Lettuce at Home

Due to the extremely high water content (94.9%), there are no successful methods of long-term home preservation for lettuce. In general, lettuce that has been completely dried can be stored in the refrigerator in a plastic storage bag 5-7 days. Lettuce does not respond well to freezing, canning or drying. For optimal nutritional value, lettuce should be eaten while it is fresh and crisp.