

Florida Food Fare

By Mary King
Family & Consumer sciences
University of Florida / IFAS
Sarasota County Extension

Argula

Description: Also known as *salad rocket*, *roquette*, *rugula* and *rucola*, arugula is a tender mustard-flavored, bitterish green, whose leaves closely resemble those of the radish in flavor and appearance. Originating in the Mediterranean and western Asia, it has been a part of Italian cuisine for many years but until recently it was often considered too peppery for American palates. Its strong flavor and attractive leaves, combine well with milder greens. It appears as one of the small flavorful leaves in the celebrated mesclun salad.

Availability: Arugula is a cool season vegetable best grown during the spring and fall. In this part of the country the best time to plant is September through February. It is generally available in the supermarket year round.

Nutritional Value: Argula is a good source of vitamin A, vitamin C, calcium and fiber. 1/2 cup, approximately 10 g., has 2.5 calories, no fat or cholesterol, 16 mg. calcium and 36.9 mg. potassium. It also yields 1.5 mg. Vitamin C, 9.7 mcg. folate and 237 IU vitamin A.

Selection and Storage: Arugula is usually sold in small bunches, with roots attached. Choose leaves that are bright green with no signs of yellowing or limpness. Nor, should it be waterlogged, which happens if it is kept too long on ice. It is very perishable. Wrap the roots in damp toweling, enclose the bunch in plastic and refrigerate. Use within a day or two.

Preparation and Use: Like radishes, Arugula can be quite hot, especially during the summer and you may want to taste it first and use it sparingly. It is particularly delicious in a salad with the contrasting citrus sweetness of oranges or tangerines. Blended with pine nuts, garlic, oil and parmesan cheese, arugula makes a flavorful pesto sauce which can be used on pasta or potatoes. Although cooked arugula loses some of its bite, it has much flavor and can be added to stir fries or pureed in soups and sauces.

Do not be tempted to rinse the leaves casually under running water, no matter how clean they appear to be. Cut off the roots and any thick stems, then dunk the leaves up and down in a bowl of cold water. Let stand a moment, then gently lift them out so sand is left at the bottom. Rinse out the bowl and repeat, a third time may even be necessary. Dry and wrap in toweling and refrigerate until serving time.

Recipes:

Caesar Arugula Salad

- 4 cups bit size pieces arugula leaves
- 4 cups bit size pieces of romaine lettuce
- 1/2 cup walnuts, large pieces
- 1 shallot minced
- 2 anchovy fillets, minced
- 1/2 teaspoon anchovy oil
- 2 tablespoons fresh lemon juice
- 2 teaspoons Dijon mustard
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 1/4 teaspoon fresh ground pepper
- 1/4 cup olive oil
- 1/4 cup fresh grated parmesan cheese
- 1 large clove garlic, minced

Toast walnuts in 500 degrees F oven for about 5 minutes or until golden brown. Set aside to cool. In small bowl, combine shallot, garlic, anchovies and their oil, lemon juice, mustard, salt and pepper. Use a fork, whisk in the oil until smooth. Just before serving, combine the romaine and arugula in a large salad bowl. Pour dressing over the greens and toss well. Add the nuts and parmesan cheese and toss again.

Arugula Pesto

- 4 cups (packed) arugula leaves
- about 6 ounces, cleaned, dried
- 1/4 cup pine nuts, toasted
- 3 garlic cloves
- 1/4 cup fresh grated parmesan cheese
- 1/4 cup olive oil

Blend arugula, pine nuts, garlic and parmesan cheese in food processor until almost smooth. With machine running, gradually add olive oil and blend well. Season with salt and pepper. Can be made ahead and refrigerated. Serve at room temperature.

Arugula and Red Onion Salad

- 12 ounces Arugula leaves
- 1 medium size red onion, sliced thin
- 1 tablespoon red wine vinegar
- 1 teaspoon finely chopped garlic
- 3 tablespoons olive oil
- Salt and pepper to taste

Clean, trim and dry arugula leaves. Place leaves in salad bowl, add onion slices. Blend vinegar, oil, garlic, salt and pepper and pour over salad. Toss and blend well.

Pasta with Arugula Tomato Sauces

1 garlic clove, minced very fine	6 kalamata olives, pitted and chopped
4 medium tomatoes, chopped	2 tablespoons olive oil
1 bunch of arugula, washed, trimmed, Dried and chopped coarsely	1 1/2 tablespoons balsamic vinegar Parmesan cheese

In large bowl, stir together garlic, tomatoes, arugula, olives, oil and vinegar. Add salt and pepper to taste, set aside for 20 minutes. Cook pasta according to package directions. Toss with sauce. Serve immediately with parmesan cheese. Serves 2.