

micro-greens

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Photography: © Jonny Hunter

TENDER TENDRILS OF CRUNCHY COLORFUL GREENS ARE THE newest new food item in gourmet restaurants and home kitchens. They are easy to grow, nutritious and flavorful. Many chefs, in pursuit of the next wild and wonderful food, began using micro-greens for their diverse flavor and effervescent colors of chartreuse to deep red, sunshine yellow and fervent greens.

It is possible to grow a garden of glorious produce in only two feet of space. Better yet, it takes a mere 5 to 14 days for the seed to grow to ready-to-pick greens. Popular micro-greens—broccoli, arugula, spicy lettuce mixes, cabbage and beets—give an array of colors and tastes. Each stage of plants' growth offers a unique a taste and texture.

Sprouts, like alfalfa, are eaten root and all after soaking. They grow in a moist environment without soil. Most micro-greens are grown in a medium of soil, vermiculite or even on a thin woven pad that holds moisture and allows the seeds to root. The tiny edible plants are sheared with scissors just as the first leaves divide. Once harvested the tasty threads of green last only five days, it's best to enjoy fresh.

Herbs like the classic Genovese flavor of sweet basil are even more intense as a seedling. Famous for its antioxidant properties broccoli micro-greens contain approximately fifty times more by weight of the anti-cancer compound sulfurophane than mature broccoli.

Many of the seeds used for micro-greens, like arugula, are mucilaginous, that is they store water in a gelatinous sac around the seed, but if soaked the seeds become a gooey mess and will not sprout. Mucilaginous seeds should be planted directly on the growing medium. Seeds used for sprouts can also be planted as micro-greens and they should be soaked in cool water for eight hours. A thin layer of moist growing medium makes the perfect environment for these same seed to develop roots and grow into tiny powerhouses of flavor.

A 10-inch x 20-inch seedling tray with a moist woven pad, organic liquid fertilizer and a few seeds will keep micro-greens producing. Water the pad and not the tender greens. Keep out of direct sunlight. When tiny leaves show, move to a well-lighted window for greening. Even a table with an incandescent bulb above the tray is sufficient to bring these mini-giants to harvest time. For my family of four we grow two squares of micro-greens weekly using a mix of seeds. We order ours from www.SproutPeople.com.

Cut fresh and enjoy!

Micro-greens Menu Mentions



Halibut and shrimp tacos with micro-greens, scallions, diced onions, cilantro and a sriracha mayonnaise



Olive encrusted ahi tuna with micro-greens and white beans

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