Get to Know Microgreens – Easy to Grow & Better than Sprouts

The appearance of miniature leafy vegetables is not the only reason they are increasing in popularity among gardening professionals, chefs, and consumers. It turns out that microgreens are a robust superfood filled with an enormous amount of energy, nutrients, and antioxidants.

The miniature veggies and herbs have the amazing ability to pack up a lot of flavour in a small amount and can be used to create texture or to give a final touch to a dish. With a plethora of nutritional benefits and distinctive taste, microgreens definitely deserve a place in your home garden and your diet.

What Are Microgreens?

Microgreens are the young seedlings of a variety edible vegetables or herbs, harvested less than two weeks after germination. During this period, also known as the cotyledon growth stage, the first set of leaves sprout, but the root system and the leaf structure are not fully developed. As the name suggests, they are pretty small in size – only one to three inches of height. Popular microgreens include kale, radish greens, onions, watercress, cabbage, broccoli, amaranth, and arugula and herbs such as basil, cilantro, parsley, chervil, and chives. What is unique about these tiny plants is that they have a stronger and more condensed taste than the mature plants.

Microgreens Vs. Sprouts

In the recent years microgreens have become a good alternative to sprouts for various reasons. Both microgreens and sprouts pack a powerful punch with an abundance of flavor and nutrients. The two differ in their planting method and therefore in their nutrient value. Unlike sprouts that are grown using only water, microgreens require soil. As they grow, microgreens absorb minerals from the soil and undergo more photosynthesis than sprouts, increasing their nutritional content. The young seedlings are more developed than sprouts and thus have slightly higher fiber content. Lastly, there have been fatal outbreaks of antibiotic-resistant E-coli traced back to sprouts. These factors give microgreens a considerable competitive advantage over sprouts.

Nutritional Content of Microgreens

Leafy vegetables are rich in beta-carotene as well as calcium and iron. Dark green leafy plants such as chard and kale are also high in lutein and zeaxanthin. Below, you can find the nutritional information for some of the most popular microgreens.

Red Cabbage Micros

- Highest levels of vitamin C – a 100-gram portion contains 147 mg of vitamin C or 245% of the daily value vs. 57 mg in an equal-sized serving of mature raw red cabbage
- Microgreen red cabbage contains 69 times more vitamin K than the mature plant
- The microgreen version has 40 times more vitamin E than the fully-grown red cabbage

Cilantro Microgreens

- Higher concentrations of carotenoids than the mature herb
- Higher levels of lutein, violaxanthin, and zeaxanthin
- The microgreen version contains 3 times more beta-carotene

Garnet Amaranth

- Contains the highest amount of vitamin K1 compared to other microgreens and its matured counterpart

Green Daikon Radish

- Has the highest levels of vitamin E compared to other microgreens and its fully-grown counterpart
- A small amount of daikon radishes can cover your daily need of vitamin C (the recommended allowance for adults is 15 mg)

Lettuce Seedlings

- Has the highest antioxidant capacity among the microgreens, especially seven days after germination
- Has the highest amounts of health-promoting phenolic compounds

Sunflower

- The microgreen consists of 24% to 30% protein

What Does This Mean for You?

Judging by the nutritional information of these selected microgreens, there are plenty of reasons to incorporate them into your diet. They are a good source of vitamin C – a powerful antioxidant that helps protect your body from the

negative impact of the free radicals. Beta-carotene reduces the risk of eye diseases and cancer, while Vitamin K plays an important role for maintaining strong and healthy bones.

It’s hard to get the required amount of vitamins and minerals you need every single day, but eating microgreens can provide a quick and easy way to do it. If you are interested in adding more microgreens into your menu, you have two options – you can either purchase them or grow them yourself. Luckily you don’t need the service of expert gardeners for this project.

Growing Microgreens

These tiny plants take far less time to grow than regular greenery and are ready for harvest within 7 to 10 days. In comparison, their mature counterparts require 10 weeks.Keep in mind that once you cut them in their early stage, the tiny greens will not continue to grow and you will need to start all over again. Microgreens are pretty easy in terms of planting and gardening because they require minimal sunlight and space. You can grow these tender and tiny greens in your kitchen or in a windowsill.

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Another benefit of home-grown microgreens is that they are not exposed to as many pollutants as commercially offered varieties. Since it’s up to you to determine the gardening conditions, such as the type and quality of soil and the exposure to pesticides, you will have toxin-free and healthier microgreens.

Growing your own microgreens provides you with easy access to

fresh and delicious mini vegetables ready for use. For more gardening ideas, be sure to read the City Garden Blog.

Further Reading:

- *Detox Cheap and Easy Without Fasting – Recipes Included*
- *Five Reasons for Sprouting at Home*
- *Your Guide to Root Vegetables – Health Benefits, Recipes, and More*
- *Five Awesome Organic Foods that Pack More Punch than Supplements*

Sources:

- *European Disease Detectives Zero In On Fenugreek As E. Coli Source* -National Public Radio – Public Health News
- *Beta-Carotene* -Wikipedia