**SWISS CHARD Beta vulgaris**

*Swiss Chard* has a delicate crisp texture with stalk-like stems and broad leaves. The ribs can vary in color from a rich red to yellow or white. Although Swiss chard did not actually originate in Switzerland and actually hails from the Mediterranean region, it derives its name from Koch, a Swiss botanist who named the vegetable in the 19th century in honor of his homeland. Its medicinal use dates back to ancient Greek and Roman times.

**Key Nutrients:**
- Vitamin A, E, K
- B1, 2, 3, 5, 6
- Vitamin C
- Biotin
- Calcium
- Carotenoids
- Choline
- Copper
- Fiber
- Folate
- Iron
- Magnesium
- Manganese
- Phosphorous
- Potassium
- Zinc

Chard, like its relatives, is rich in vitamins and phytonutrients. For example, chard contains over 700% of the recommended daily allowance (RDA) of vitamin K in one cup cooked which gives chard its bone-health promoting properties.

Swiss chard also provides magnesium which along with potassium and fiber in the greens helps regulate muscle contractions, supports healthy blood pressure and promotes cardiovascular health.

Swiss chard is also an excellent source of manganese and iron as well as copper, calcium, phosphorous, zinc, folate, and biotin.

The reddish and yellowish pigments in Swiss chard contain valuable antioxidants and phytonutrients. Special epoxyxanthophyll carotenoids occur in the red and yellow pigments found in chard. The phytonutrients, betalains, which are concentrated in chard's colorful pigments have antioxidant, anti-inflammatory and detoxification properties.

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**Recipe Tips:**
- Use chard leaves raw in salads
- Wilt leaves and chop ribs & stems to add to stir-fries with other veggies
- Saute lightly and season with coconut oil, lemon juice and garlic
- Use steamed leaves as a wrap

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Additionally, chard contains at least 13 different \textit{polyphenol antioxidants} including \textit{kaempferol}, which \textit{protects the cardiovascular system}\textsuperscript{iii}, and \textit{syringic acid}, which is believed to help \textit{regulate blood sugar levels}. This blood glucose steadying is thought to arise at least in part due to syringic acid’s ability to inhibit the activity of the enzyme \textit{alpha-glucosidase} which breaks down carbohydrates into simple sugars.\textsuperscript{iv,v} In addition to syringic acid, chard also contains good amounts of \textit{fiber} and \textit{protein} which further help to stabilize blood glucose by regulating the speed of digestion.

Research further suggests that chard may \textit{support the ability of pancreatic cells to regenerate}, including the beta cells which are responsible for the production and release of insulin.

\textbf{Proposed Health Benefits:}
- Supports healthy connective tissues
- Promotes cardiovascular health
- Balances blood sugar
- Prevents anemia
- Strengthens the immune system

\textbf{Nutrition Facts (per raw cup):}
- Calories: ~7
- Fiber: 1g
- Protein: 1g
- Fat: 0g
- Carbohydrates: 1g
- Sugar: 0g

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Cooking Chard

To prepare chard for cooking, rinse the greens under running water. Do not soak the greens in order to avoid leaching of water-soluble nutrients. Stack the leaves and slice them into one-inch slices. Alternatively, strip the leaves from the stems and tear into smaller pieces. The stalks can be cut into smaller chunks.

Oxalate in Chard, Beets, Greens, & Spinach

Chard, beet greens and spinach are members of the Amaranthaceae family and therefore contain oxalates. Oxalic acid is a natural product in plants which given them a bitter, sharp taste. Oxalates can interfere with the absorption of certain minerals. Therefore, these greens are best eaten in moderation in rotation with other types of leafy greens. Boiling is thought to reduce the impact of oxalic acid and also gives chard a sweeter taste.

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References


