

July 2015 | www.elizabethrider.com | Elizabeth Rider | Nutrition

10 Healthy Ways to Use Fresh Mint



Is your mint plant exploding to the point that you feel guilty for not using it? Yeah, me too.

The great thing about mint is that it smells heavenly and it's so easy to grow. (Quick tip: always give it its own container or it will choke out your garden.) The not-so-great thing about mint is that no one really knows what to do with it, in the US at least, because we mostly see mint in sweet-tasting preparations. Not anymore! Mint itself is not any sweeter than basil or other more common herbs, you just have to get creative (any maybe a little brave) to try it in savory dishes. It's really great in just about everything.

ASIDE FROM GREAT FLAVOR, MINT IS EXTREMELY GOOD FOR YOU AS WELL. HERE ARE A FEW HEALTH BENEFITS OF MINT:

Mint can...

- ...aid digestion
- ...be used to relieve IBS, indigestion and heartburn
- ...possibly relieve tension headaches
- ...be a great source of vitamins & minerals
- ...provide an almost 0 calorie drink alternative when mixed with water (mint contains only about 5 calories per 2 tablespoons) – it's also very low on the glycemic index

Beyond all of that, growing your own herbs is one of the most cost-effective ways to eat well and add a gourmet touch to your food. A sprouted herb plant is only about \$3 (even the organic ones!) and will yield food for months, maybe even years. Buying a small packet of herbs at the store is usually \$3 or more, and it's only enough for one recipe. I plant mint, basil, chives, rosemary, thyme and a few others every year, usually for less than 20 bucks, and I use them almost daily. It's a no-brainer!

Back to the mint. If you have more mint than you know what to do with this should help...

HERE ARE 10 WAYS TO USE FRESH MINT:

1. Add it to Greek yogurt with berries

Berries and mint pair beautifully. Mix plain unsweetened Greek yogurt with strawberries (or mixed berries) and sprinkle with chopped fresh mint. De-lish.

2. Make your own mint tea to aid digestion

Use 5-10 big leaves or more depending on how strong you want it. Tear the leaves and place in mug, then muddle the leaves for a few seconds with the back of a wooden spoon. Pour very hot (not boiling) water over the leaves and let steep 5-10 minutes. You can remove the leaves or leave them in (puny!) – I leave them in and eat them as well.

3. Change up your protein smoothie

Add 3-4 fresh mint leaves to your chocolate protein smoothie for a delicious variety. I love ice, water, USANA Chocolate Nutrimeal, flax seeds and mint whipped up in the blender.

4. Try strawberry, mint & basil with balsamic

This combo is DELICIOUS alone as a side or on top of grilled meats or a salad, or use it as a bruschetta topper with a whole grain baguette and good cheese. Your friends will be asking for the recipe!

READ MORE AT THE JUICE BAR

NOTE: Some sentiments contained within "What We're Reading" articles may not strictly conform with PROJECT: PFC's nutritional outlook. We read articles containing opposing information all the time and derive our nutritional philosophies from the latest science, the opinions of experts worldwide and our anecdotal experiences in the field. We keep an open mind and a strong affinity for fact-based evidence to help make the world of nutrition "Simple Again" for you.

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4. Try strawberry, mint & basil with balsamic

This combo is DELICIOUS alone as a side or on top of mixed greens as a salad, or use it as a bruschetta topper with a whole grain baguette and goat cheese. Your friends will be impressed. The measurements are fluid, I'd say about 2 cups halved or quartered strawberries mixed with 10-20 leaves each of chopped mint and basil. 3-4 tablespoons of a high-quality aged balsamic will finish it perfectly.

5. Make a minty lime fizzler

Muddle 5-8 mint leaves in the bottom of a glass. Add ice, a healthy squeeze of lime and club soda with a few drops of stevia to sweeten. (Is it 5 o'clock somewhere? Turn this into a low-sugar mojito by adding an ounce of white rum if you so please.)

6. Try watermelon, basil, mint salad with feta

Just four ingredients and this salad will wow you. Add a sprinkle of sea salt to round out the flavors. Again, the measurements are fluid, use the same measurements as the strawberry salad above.

7. Add mint to chimichurri sauce to make it even better

I just realized I've never written out my chimichurri for you all, I'll do that soon!

You can also try one of these great salads:

8. Quinoa Tabouli With Parsley & Mint

Ingredients:

2 cups cooked quinoa	1 cucumber, skin on, seeded and diced into small cubes
1 cup finely chopped flat leaf parsley	½ cup finely chopped fresh mint leaves
½ cup quartered cherry or grape tomatoes	¼ cup finely chopped red onion
3 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil	3 tablespoons lemon juice, or to taste
1 clove garlic, peeled and cut in half	½ teaspoon fine sea salt (like Real Salt brand)

Recipe: Whisk together the olive oil, lemon juice and salt in the bottom of a large bowl. Add the garlic to the dressing and let it marinate while you prepare the other ingredients; discard the garlic halves before adding the rest of the ingredients. Fold in the rest of the ingredients and chill. Serve cold or room temperature.

9. Chopped Summer Kale Salad Recipe

Ingredients:

1 15 ounce can garbanzo beans, drained and rinsed well	1 medium zucchini, chopped
1 medium cucumber, chopped	1 yellow, orange or red bell pepper, chopped
½ large red onion, chopped	1 tablespoon fresh dill, finely chopped
3-4 large leaves green kale, stemmed & chopped into ½ inch pieces, then massaged for 30 seconds to soften	1 tablespoon freshly squeezed lemon juice
1 tablespoon fresh mint, finely chopped	1 ½ tablespoons red wine vinegar
1 ½ tablespoons extra virgin olive oil	¼ teaspoon freshly ground black pepper
½ teaspoon sea salt (plus more to taste)	

Tip: When chopping the veggies the idea is to make them all about the same size as the garbanzo beans.

Recipe: Rinse and prepare all produce. In a large salad bowl, add the beans, veggies and herbs then drizzle with the lemon juice, vinegar and olive oil. Add sea salt & pepper to taste and toss well to combine. If you can, let sit at least 15 minutes to let the flavors come together. Store in an airtight glass container up to 5 days in the refrigerator.

10. Mediterranean Herb Quinoa Salad Recipe *most affordable when you grow your own herbs

Ingredients:

1 cup uncooked quinoa, rinsed well	2 cloves garlic, crushed, grated, or pressed
½ cup finely chopped scallions	1 cup grape or cherry tomatoes, quartered
1 cup cucumber, chopped into small cubes	½ cup radish, finely chopped
2 tablespoons fresh mint, finely chopped	2 tablespoons cilantro, finely chopped
1 cup finely chopped parsley	1 handful arugula, finely chopped
2 tablespoons roasted red peppers, finely chopped	¼ cup pitted kalamata olives, finely chopped
¼ cup organic crumbled feta cheese	¼ cup freshly squeezed lemon juice (~1-2 lemons)
¼ cup extra virgin olive oil	1 pinch tsp sea salt
¼ tsp freshly ground black pepper	

Recipe:

Bring the 2 cups of water to a boil, add the quinoa and reduce to medium heat. Let simmer about 20 minutes until all of water is absorbed and the quinoa is tender. Transfer to a mixing bowl and let cool to room temperature. You can put it in the refrigerator to cool it more quickly. (You can prepare the quinoa up to 4 days early and keep it in an airtight glass container in the refrigerator.)

While the quinoa cooks:

– First, mix the garlic, olive oil, lemon juice, salt and pepper in a small bowl and let sit while you chop the veggies to allow the garlic to infuse the dressing.

– Second, chop/prepare and reserve the rest of the ingredients to be mixed into the salad.

Add all ingredients and dressing to the bowl of quinoa and toss until well combine.

Refrigerate for at least 30 minutes before serving to allow the flavors to develop together.

- See more at: <http://www.elizabethrider.com/mediterranean-herb-quinoa-salad/#sthash.GJotk2rk.dpuf>

Bonus 11. Jazz up your water.

Add fresh mint to plain or sparkling water, or even freeze whole leaves in ice cubes to add beautiful color to your beverage.

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