

Family Living Focus

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use in a few days. Prepackaged greens are bagged in a specific material for the product, remove as much as you want to use, roll up to reclose and clip.

Rinse leaves in cool running water to remove dirt and dust. Even if packaged greens have been washed, it will not hurt to wash them again at home. Do not use detergent; produce will absorb the chemicals. Soaps and detergents are not intended to be used on food.

Examine leaves for weeds or interlopers, drain and pat dry on a towel. Spin drying will bruise delicate leaves. If not serving immediately, wrap gently in a slightly damp towel and seal in a plastic bag. Store in the refrigerator at 40 degrees F. in the crisper, away from raw meats, poultry or fish. They should remain fresh for several days. If leaves have become wilted, revive them in cool water for 10-15 minutes.

Safe food handling is important for all fresh produce. Recently several fruits and vegetables have been linked to food-borne illness. Even though these account for a very small percentage of cases, it is a concern. Use clean hands and utensils when

working with fresh produce. Read the labels and follow safe food handling guidelines.

Use "sell by" or "use by" information if provided on the package or bulk container. Put food away promptly when you get home. As the shelf life lengthens, bacterial growth increases. Throw away vegetables that have been stored more than a few days, are moldy, slimy or show other signs of deterioration. If the bag begins to balloon after several days, discard.

In addition to what consumers can do, the Food and Drug Administration has issued a draft guide describing steps farmers and processors can take to help prevent disease causing microorganisms from contaminating their produce. The guide addresses issues such as water quality, worker hygiene, field and facility sanitation, manure management and transportation.

When fresh produce is served, take care that it is not at room temperature for more than four hours. This includes preparation, transportation and serving time. At buffets where guests serve themselves, use smaller trays of food that can be

replaced as needed. Avoid adding fresh foods to those already setting out. Discard any that have been out more than four hours.

Properly handled mesclun is a treat to the eye, as well as the palate. Colors range from bronze to various shades of green to reds; shapes from simple to lacy; and textures from soft to crisp. Rich in vitamin A and potassium, yet low in calories, mesclun served with a low calorie dressing it is a great way to contribute to your "5 A Day" servings of fruit and vegetables. What better way to enjoy nature's best.

Designer Greens
Have you tried the new "designer greens," those leafy mixes called mesclun? They are being served in trendy restaurants and are available in the produce section of many grocery stores. Stores are selling mesclun in bulk from open boxes or as prepackaged greens. You can also purchase seeds and grow a crop in your home garden. Any way you get them, one cup of these tasty blends is equal to one vitamin packed serving from the vegetable group.

Mesclun is a mixture of young lettuces and other leafy greens like arugula, endive, mustard, chicory, cresses, oak-leaf lettuce, and romaine.

Bachelor's buttons, chive blossoms, marigolds, nasturtiums, violets and other edible flowers or petals may also be part of the mix. Although the specific ingredients vary, the combination of colors, textures and flavors is always interesting.

Seed mixes of mesclun grow quickly and are ready to be used in a few weeks. Harvest in the morning for peak crispness. Use scissors to clip greens when they are a few inches tall. They also make an attractive garden border.

Whether you grow your own or buy from the market, proper care of the harvested product will insure good eating. Select packages or greens that look and smell fresh in amounts you will

Quilt Gathering

CORNWALL (Lebanon Co.)
— On Sept. 14, the Lebanon Quilters Guild begins another year of projects, workshops, exchanges, and other activities related to quilting. Any one interested in quilting is urged to attend the first session to be held Monday, Sept. 14, at 7:30 p.m. in Freeman's Hall at Cornwall Manor in Lebanon. For more information, call Kathy Shaheen (717) 867-1745.

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