

Collard Roll Ups

Serves: 6

Collards are ubiquitous in the south but not as popular here in New England where kale seems to rule. I've been planting collards in my garden along with kale, chard, and other greens for the past few years. Collard greens, a cruciferous vegetable, are easy to grow and last well into the fall, surviving, and the leaves getting sweeter and more tender, after a frost. The last of my garden collards appeared in this delicious, warming dish filled with leftover cooked rice and a simple meat filling. Have fun with various fillings and herb combinations to suit your preferences. Make it vegan with a grain, legumes, and or tofu/tempeh.



Collards are a Super Food! These nutrient-dense greens provide vitamins and minerals important for bone health, liver function, digestion, blood glucose regulation, skin, hair, and the immune system (kick those colds and COVID). Collards contain these essential nutrients:

- **Vitamin A** is important for all body tissues, healthy skin and hair, eyes, organs, and supports the immune system.
- **Vitamin C** is an antioxidant that helps protect your cells from damage, aids in iron absorption, and helps the body build and maintain collagen, the most abundant protein in the body (skin, hair, bone, muscles, tendons, cartilage).
- **Vitamin K** is a group of vitamins necessary for blood clotting and helping wounds heal, improves calcium absorption and supports bone health (not enough K increases the risk of osteoporosis), improves beneficial gut microbiota and reduces intestinal inflammation.
- **Calcium**, known for its role in bone health, is also important for blood clotting, muscle contractions, sending/receiving nerve signals, hormones, and heart rhythm.
 - Dairy products are typically associated with calcium; however, 1 cup cooked collards provides about 268g of calcium, 21% of your daily requirement and the calcium in greens is highly bioavailable.
- **Fiber** keeps the digestive tract running smoothly and helps lower cholesterol, control blood sugar, regulate immune function, and help suppress tumor growth in the colon. The recommended daily intake of fiber is 25-30g/day.
 - 1 cup of cooked collards provides about 8 grams of fiber
- **Potassium**: regulates heartbeat, muscle contraction, balances salt.

In addition, collards also provide some alpha-lipoic acid (antioxidant), folate, vitamins B1 (thiamin), B3 (niacin), B6, and vitamin E, zinc, phosphorus, magnesium, and iron.

Studies show that people who eat cruciferous vegetables regularly have a lower risk of developing cancer, better glucose and insulin control, reduced inflammation and oxidative stress, a healthier digestive tract (and regular smooth bowel movements), better mood, and much more.

Important to Know: for anyone on blood thinner medication, please talk to your doctor if you change (increase or decrease) the amount of leafy greens in your diet due to the vitamin K content in the greens and their role in blood clotting.

Ingredients:

- 1 tablespoon olive or avocado oil
- 1 onion, chopped
- 4 cloves garlic, chopped
- 1 lb. ground meat of choice (or seitan, tempeh, tofu, legumes)
- 1 ½ cups cooked rice or grain of choice
- 2 tsp Italian seasoning (or other herbs of choice)
- Salt to taste
- 6 large collard greens leaves, washed and large end stem removed
- 1 jar marinara sauce
- Optional: freshly chopped parsley
- Optional: dairy/non-dairy cheese

Preparation:

- Preheat oven to 350 degrees F.
- Use leftover cooked rice/grain or prepare rice/grain according to package instructions.
- Warm a large skillet over medium heat. Add oil to warm.
- Add onion and cook a 2-3 minutes then add garlic and cook 30-60 seconds.
- Add meat and cook, breaking up with a spoon, until cooked through.
- Add Italian seasoning and salt.
- Bring a couple quarts of water in a large skillet to a boil (large enough to hold collard leaves). Add collards and let stand for a few minutes to soften.
- Place a couple large spoonfuls of meat mixture and rice into the middle of collard leaf and roll up, tucking in ends (like a burrito) to contain mixture.



- Add some marinara to bottom of baking dish. Place rolls dish and cover with remaining marinara sauce.
- Bake about 20 minutes until hot and bubbly.
- Top with cheese if desired and fresh parsley (or other herbs of choice).



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