Red Mustard

In Yuma County, a variety of leafy greens are grown for use in a variety of Spring Mixes, a tasty blend of sweet baby lettuces, pungent chicories and tangy greens. Overall, less than 100 acres of Red Mustard is grown in the region, and is a key ingredient in the low-calorie, fat and cholesterol-free salad mixes.

Red Mustard is a beautiful when planted side-by-side with other leafy greens as it noted for its vibrant, dark red, almost purple, leaves.

Add a couple of red mustard leaves to a roast beef sandwich for a real kick. Red Mustard adds zip to any salad, but a little goes a long way as it has a spicy, peppery flavor.

Red Mustard is a member of the cabbage family. Technically, the term "mustard greens" refers to a single species of Old World plants (*Brassica juncea*), which is thought to have originated in the Central Asian Himalayas before spreading to China, India, and the Caucasus.

The colors of mustards can range from green to a deep burgundy, with leaves from smooth to prickly, nippy to fiery, chewy to fibrous and when harvested young, may not even resemble the plant at the older stage.

Typically used in salads, Red Mustard can also be briefly blanched or boiled to remove hints of bitter or pungent taste. In the southern US, the liquid is saved from the cooking of the greens and used for dunking cornbread or, like all vegetable liquid should be, reserved for soups or stews. The water can also be used as part of the liquid in muffins, pancakes, breads, etc.

In China, Red Mustard cabbage is preserved like sauerkraut and pickled in lactic acid. The lactic acid takes the edge off the bitter substances contained in the greens, while simultaneously adding a spicy taste.

Mustard leaves are an excellent source of vitamins C and E, fiber, folate, calcium, iron, magnesium, potassium, and B6. The calcium in mustard leaves ranks as the highest in its bioavailability.

All young mustard greens deteriorate faster than the mature leaves. They can be wrapped in paper towels and put in a plastic bag and stored in the refrigerator for a short period of time.

Mature Red Mustard leaves can be steamed, boiled, sautéed, or braised for ten to twenty minutes. The longer they are cooked, the softer the flavor becomes. If cooked just until just tender, they will have a spicy flavor. Baby mustard greens, on the other hand, can be eaten raw in salads or sandwiches.

Mustard is a member of the Brassica family of plants which bears tiny round edible seeds as well as tasty leaves. Its English name, *mustard*, is derived from a contraction of the Latin *mustum ardens* meaning *burning wine*. This is a reference to the spicy heat of the crushed mustard seeds and the French practice of mixing the ground seeds with *must*, the young, unfermented juice of wine grapes.
At first, mustard was considered a medicinal plant rather than a culinary one. In the sixth century B.C., Greek scientist Pythagoras used mustard as a remedy for scorpion stings. One hundred years later, Hippocrates used mustard in a variety of medicines and poultices. Mustard pastes were applied to "cure" toothaches and a number of other ailments.

Prepared mustard dates back thousands of years to the early Romans, who used to grind mustard seeds and mix them with wine into a paste not much different from the prepared mustards we know today.

The mustard seed is a prominent reference for those of the Christian faith, exemplifying something which is small and insignificant, which when planted, grows in strength and power.

Pope John XXII was so fond of mustard that he created a new Vatican position - grand moutardier du pape (mustard-maker to the pope) - and promptly filled the post with his nephew.

In 1866, Jeremiah Colman, founder of Colman's Mustard of England, was appointed as mustard-maker to Queen Victoria. Colman perfected the technique of grinding mustard seeds into a fine powder without creating the heat which brings out the oil. The oil must not be exposed or the flavor will evaporate with the oil.

We all know that losers and quitters can't cut the mustard (live up to the challenge). And perhaps the reason ballpark mustard is so popular is because pitchers apply the "mustard" to their fastballs to get those strike-outs. The disabling and even lethal chemical weapon known as mustard gas is a synthetic copy based on the volatile nature of mustard oils.

Wild forms of mustard and its relatives the radish and turnip can be found over west Asia and Europe, suggesting that their domestication took place somewhere in that area.

There has been recent research into varieties of mustards that have a high oil content for use in the production of biodiesel, a renewable liquid fuel similar to diesel fuel. The biodiesel made from mustard oil has good cold flow properties and octane ratings. The leftover meal after pressing out the oil has also been found to be an effective organic pesticide.

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