

University of California Cooperative Extension, Alameda County

# Tips for Parents of Preschool Children



## “S” is for Spinach!

- Spinach is an excellent source of Vitamins A and K.
- Popeye helped to make spinach popular.
- Wash greens in a pan of cold water. Let the leaves soak for a few minutes to loosen grit or dirt.
- Remember spinach reduces in volume when cooked, so two pounds will be two cups after cooking.

## Seasonal Recipe: Spinach Corn Casserole

Makes 12 servings. ½ cup per serving

### INGREDIENTS

- 16-ounce package chopped frozen spinach
- ½ cup finely chopped white onion
- 2 (14¾-ounce) cans creamed corn
- 1 tablespoon margarine
- 2 teaspoons vinegar
- 1 teaspoon salt
- ½ teaspoon ground black pepper

### TOPPING

- ½ cup bread crumbs
- 2 tablespoons grated Parmesan cheese
- 1 tablespoon margarine



### PREPARATION

1. Preheat oven to 400°F. Warm frozen spinach in a saucepan over medium heat. Drain excess liquid.
2. Combine spinach, onion, and creamed corn in a casserole dish.
3. Melt 1 tablespoon margarine and add to casserole dish. Add vinegar, salt, and ground black pepper. Mix ingredients together.
4. Spread bread crumbs and Parmesan cheese over top of casserole.
5. Melt remaining margarine and drizzle over topping. Bake for 20 to 30 minutes. Serve while hot.

### Nutrition information per serving:

Calories 100, Carbohydrate 18g, Dietary fiber 3g, Protein 4g, Total fat 2g, Saturated fat 1g, Trans Fat 0g, Cholesterol 4mg, Sodium 419mg

### Recipe adapted from:

Champion for Change Recipes, [www.championsforchange.cdph.ca.gov](http://www.championsforchange.cdph.ca.gov)

## Buying and Storage Tips

- Choose dark green spinach with a fresh smell and tender leaves. Avoid any slimy or moldy leaves.
- Remove stems or heavy ribs.
- Spinach is best eaten fresh, but it can be stored up to three or four days.
- Wash, dry, and wrap leaves and store in the refrigerator vegetable bin.

Source: Food Facts: Farmers Market Fun Family Foods. WVU Extension, [www.ext.wvu.edu](http://www.ext.wvu.edu)

## What Should Parents Know About Children?

- Experts recommend offering children a new food as many as 20 times.
- Do not get frustrated or give up when exposing your child to new foods. Even if they've tasted it 20 times before, they might still just taste a tiny bite.
- Offer new foods when your child is hungry.
- Allow your child to look at, smell, and touch the new food. This is how kids learn about new things.

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# What I Can Do to Help My Child Be Active and Healthy at Home

## Why It Matters

Children who are well-nourished and active perform better in school. It is best for children to develop good eating habits when young that will last until adulthood. Children between the ages 3 - 5 learn life skills through physical play. Physical play is how children learn about themselves and others.

## Produce of the Season

- Spinach is in season along with other leafy greens (Asian Greens, collards, lettuce, mustard).
- Asparagus and peas are also available in farmers markets.
- March to April is a good time to plant spinach.



## Ideas to Help My Child

*Parents can help children learn to eat a variety of fruits and vegetables while helping them with math.*

1. **Walk to the Market with Your Child.** Whether you go to the regular supermarket or farmers market, take your child with you. Let your child pick the produce.
2. **Cook Together.** Teach your child to wash fresh veggies, tear spinach leaves, and snap pea pods. Encourage your child to count the peas from the snap pea and the leaves of the spinach.
3. **Offer Colorful Meals.** Make an effort to offer colorful veggies at meals and snacks. Pick a color and ask your child to count the number of veggies of that color, and then the next color. Then ask, "How many total? Let's count."
4. **Buy Vegetables that are Seasonal.** Check store specials for the best in-season buy. Ask your child to help you compare prices. Say, "I wonder which stores offer lower and higher prices."



*Be supportive and loving with your child. Take time to give him or her your attention while still doing your home tasks.*

*Photos: Network for a Healthy California*

## What My Child Learned In School

Spinach is one of the seasonal vegetables available this month. Your child learned the importance of eating spinach and other greens. Spinach has a lot of Vitamin K, and is a good source of Vitamins A and C. Popeye the sailor helped make spinach famous. Spinach has a lot of green leaves and your child learned to count the leaves and prepare a snack. Ask your child how many leaves they ate today for a snack?

## Enjoy Your Time With Your Child.

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