

# Make Ahead Blueberry Kale Salad



Kale salad is, hands down, my favorite veggie side dish for a time-crunched weeknight. You can store it, dressing and all, in the fridge for at least a couple of days, it's full of nutrients, and you can make it a million different ways so it never gets boring.

Go online and search for information on the health benefits of kale and you will find claims galore- it promotes weight loss, wards off cancer and heart disease, prevents diabetes, and even prevents wrinkles! More on that [here](#).

You can buy pre-bagged kale salads at the grocery store in many different flavors and varieties. I buy those a lot

because they are so easy and allow me not to think too much after a long day at work, but they aren't too friendly on the wallet. Sometimes I think these pre-made salads make sense, even financially- it's cheaper than buying all the ingredients to make something like it from scratch. But, when I happened to have kale left over from another recipe and a pack of blueberries from Costco, I found this simple salad at [www.natashaskitchen.com](http://www.natashaskitchen.com). It was as easy to mix up as any packaged one, and didn't cost me a dime!

Toss in a little leftover roasted chicken or even shrimp to make this a fabulous brown-bag lunch. I served mine with some barbecued chicken and my [Browned Butter Skillet Cornbread](#). This sweet and tangy salad was the perfect foil to spicy barbecue.

For this salad, you could buy the kale in bunches and clean it yourself, or you can buy pre-bagged, chopped kale. I get mine at Aldi's already chopped for like \$2. For the carrots, just use what you've got. I had baby carrots that weren't being eaten, so I chopped up some of those. Regular carrots or even the bagged shredded carrots would work great as well.

### Make Ahead Blueberry Kale Salad

- 5 cups kale, chopped into bite-sized pieces
- 1 cup carrots, peeled and cut into bite-sized pieces
- 1 cup raisins
- 1/3 cup olive oil
- 1/4 cup apple cider vinegar
- salt and pepper to taste
- 1 cup fresh blueberries

In a large bowl, mix kale, carrots, raisins, olive oil, vinegar, salt and pepper until well combined. Cover with airtight lid and store in refrigerator until ready to serve. Stir in blueberries just before serving.

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# 2-Ingredient Black Bean Brownies



I'm not much for "healthier" versions of desserts, for the most part. Most of the time, I find them less satisfying and end up wishing I'd just eaten a little of the real thing. There are a few exceptions to this, however. Occasionally I run across a lightened up dessert recipe that is actually good in its own right- not necessarily because it tastes just like the original, but because I enjoy it for what it is. Black bean brownies are one of those.

Black bean brownies have been around for a while. I think I've been making these for at least 10 years and I have no idea where I got the recipe originally. A lot of recipes for these that I've found online are from scratch. Great, if you

have that kind of time. For me, if I'm craving black bean brownies, I probably am not going to be patient enough to make them the old fashioned way.

This recipe uses nothing but a can of black beans and a box of brownie mix. No eggs, no butter. You puree the beans very well in a food processor or blender, stir in the brownie mix, and bake as usual. That's all there is to it! These brownies are moist and fudgy, and you can't taste the black beans at all. Really! The best part, in my opinion, is that the beans add fiber and protein, which make the brownies quite a bit more filling than regular brownies... so it's harder for me to eat the whole pan ☐

Just like regular brownies, these taste best if they are a bit underbaked. I usually take them out of the oven about 5 minutes earlier than the brownie mix box says I should.

It's best not to tell people what's in these before they try them. Just let them have one, then come clean and enjoy their reaction.

## 2-Ingredient Black Bean Brownies

- 1- 14.5 oz. can black beans
- 1 box brownie mix

Preheat oven to temperature designated on brownie mix. Spray an 8x8 baking pan with cooking spray. Drain and rinse black beans very well. Place beans in food processor or blender with about 1/4 cup water and process until beans are pureed. Stir in brownie mix. You may add more water as needed if mixture is too thick. Spread brownie batter in prepared pan and bake as directed on brownie mix. Allow brownies to cool completely before cutting and serving.



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# Green Coconut Mango Peach Smoothie



Happy spring, everyone! Here in the heartland, spring means crazy weather- shorts and t-shirts one day, down parkas the next. With the weather come a plethora of springtime illnesses. Allergies, viral infections, you name it, and you or someone you know have it.

At my workplace, we had an outbreak of norovirus last week. If you aren't familiar, it's a VERY unpleasant GI infection. If you are familiar, you know VERY unpleasant is probably an

understatement ☐ When one of my co-workers was asking what she should do to feel better, this smoothie, full of protein, fruit, veggies and fluids, immediately came to mind.

I have the great fortune of working in a university research department with a metabolic kitchen, and a cook who has worked in that kitchen for something like 30 years. His collection of research-based recipes is incredible- he has a recipe for just about every kind of ailment. He told me about this smoothie recipe he had made for some research subjects using coconut milk. Sounded yummy to me!

The research doctor in charge of the study with the delicious smoothies was [Terry Wahls](#), who used a research-based diet to treat her own multiple sclerosis. She was in a wheelchair to begin with, and now she walks without assistance! I'm told that she is now testing the diet on subjects with multiple sclerosis and also on people with a variety of other autoimmune and neurological diseases. I have read her book, [The Wahls Protocol](#). The diet is quite strict and I don't think I would be able to follow it unless I were seriously ill myself. However, I decided to incorporate some elements of it into my daily routine. Eating more berries, dark leafy greens, and fewer refined carbs is probably a good idea for anyone. Plus, any excuse to eat more coconut ☐

I started adding coconut milk to my regular smoothie recipe after hearing about the research kitchen recipe mostly because it just sounded really tasty. However, science has shown that you do need to eat some fat with your vegetables to absorb the nutrients they provide. More about that [here](#). If you aren't a fan of coconut, avocado is a good smoothie additive as well, but not as convenient since cut avocados turn brown on you.

Also, my recipe is not paleo since I use Greek yogurt for protein, but it would be quite easy to adapt this to a paleo diet by either leaving out the yogurt or replacing it with a paleo protein supplement.

## Green Coconut Smoothie

- 1 cup frozen mango
- 1 peach, pitted
- 1 cup unflavored Greek yogurt
- 1.5 cups coconut water
- 0.5 cup coconut milk
- 1 handful fresh spinach
- 1 t vanilla

Place all ingredients in blender. Blend on high until smooth. Serve immediately. Makes about 1 liter.