

Kale Chips
By Ora Emmerich
UCCE El Dorado County Master Food Preservers

Sneak a peek down the natural foods aisle at the grocery store and find out what the “in” crowd snacks on instead of boring old chips. Right there, beside the bean dip, stands a bag of kale chips. Yes, kale chips have arrived, so move over, pretzels, and let the newest craze unfold. Loaded with vitamins A and K and a lot of other great nutrients, crunchy kale chips provide guilt-free snacking opportunities.

Commercially prepared kale chips come in many flavors, including Ranch, Curry and Nacho Cheese. Actually, many varieties of flavors can be used when making kale chips. Sea salt, nutritional yeast, seasoned salt or any spices make great choices for flavoring the kale, as do blended ingredients in which the kale can be drenched. Spicy cayenne gives a kick to this snack, and some recipes use dates and cacao to produce a sweet, dessert chip. Use imagination, or check the many variations available in cookbooks and on the internet.

The basic recipe for making kale chips at home in the oven requires little skill. Preheat the oven to about 350° F. Clean kale thoroughly under cold, running water to prevent foodborne illness, and remove stems. This process involves holding the stem of the kale tightly in one hand. Use the other hand to strip the leaves from the stem by grasping the stem above the holding hand and pulling the hands apart quickly. If done properly, one hand now holds a nude stem and the other a bunch of kale leaf. This might actually turn out to be fun for some people. Rip the kale leaves into pieces, not too small, and place in a single layer on a non-stick cookie sheet or on parchment paper if using a regular cookie sheet. Simply sprinkle the chosen seasonings on the kale and bake for about 10 minutes, or until dry and crunchy, being careful not to let the leaves begin to brown. Done.

The dehydrator makes easy work of kale chips. Simply follow the instructions for preparation above and place on dehydrator trays instead of cookie sheets. Dehydrate at the proper temperature according to the manual for vegetables until dry and crunchy. Enjoy.

For questions about safe home food preservation, or to schedule a speaker for organizations or clubs on the topics of food safety or food preservation, call the Master Food Preservers at (530) 621-5506. The Master Food Preservers of El Dorado County offer free public education classes. Sign up for the E- Newsletter at <http://ucanr.org/mfpnews/> to receive information about the classes, which begin in the summer. For more information, be sure to go to the Master Food Preserver website at http://cecentralsierra.ucanr.org/Master_Food_Preservers/.