

A photograph of several fresh, vibrant green mint leaves scattered across a plain white background. The leaves are of various sizes and orientations, showing their characteristic serrated edges and prominent vein structure. One larger stem with several leaves is positioned in the upper left quadrant, while other individual leaves are scattered in the top right, bottom right, and bottom center areas.

## Minty Fresh

Mint has been used as a medicinal cure for common ailments such as headaches, heartburn, indigestion, gas and sleeping problems since the Greeks added the plant to their bathing rituals.



Known for their sweet flavor and cool aftertaste, these fragrant plants are some of the most popular herbs used in American cuisine. Mint leaves can be found in teas, jellies, candies and ice creams. Mint also is used in skin care products and is a component of many pharmaceuticals.

### Facts

Mint is a perennial herb in the *Lamiaceae* family, and is used as a flavoring or scent. Traditionally, herbs with fragrant leaves are termed mint and include other cooking plants such as rosemary, sage, oregano and basil. The aroma comes from menthol found in hairlike oil glands on the leaves and stems. The most common and popular mints are peppermint and spearmint. Most contain vitamins B-1 and B-2, carotenes, calcium, iron and phosphorus.

### In the kitchen

Mint's flavorful taste initially was used by the ancient Greeks as a digestive aid; a treatment for colds, coughs and fevers; and a food flavor. Spearmint and peppermint sprigs can be added to drinks and fruit dishes as a garnish, or made into a refreshing tea. Mint commonly is used in Middle Eastern cuisine, complements lamb and pairs well with chocolate. Potosi Hot Springs Resort in Pony, Montana, features Minted Grilled Lamb Chops, and also flavors its water with mint sprigs and lemon wedges. Whip up some

Ginger Citrus Honey Mint Dressing from The Noosa Spa at the South Pacific Resort in Noosaville, Australia, which has a zesty sweet taste that's great on salads, new potatoes or muesli—a healthy, all-natural cereal made of whole oats, dried fruit and nuts. Or create a delicious Apple-Mint Salad like the one served at Gold Lake Mountain Resort and Spa in Ward, Colorado. See also **Mint, Melon, Cucumber Salsa on Salmon**, courtesy of The Heartland Spa in Gilman, Illinois.

### In the spa

Mint's cool aroma also lends itself well to skin care products, offering restorative benefits and a refreshing scent that heals the soul. Bioelements' Comfortably Clean Daily Showering Gel contains mint and citrus aromatherapy oils in a soap-free gel cleanser. Colorlab Cosmetics features Candy Cane mint-flavored lip gloss. Lather on Spa Specifics' CoCo Mocha Mint Hand & Foot Collection to soften, condition and exfoliate. Try an Herbal Mint Toner from Baxter of California to remove dirt and oil from the pores. Aveda carries a Rosemary Mint product collection, including hand and body wash, body lotion, a bath bar and shaving gel.

From nail services to body scrubs, the cool scent of mint is used in a number of spa treatments throughout



## Quick Facts

- There are 15 common varieties of mint.
- Wintergreen frequently is mistaken for a mint plant, but is actually an oily chemical called methyl salicylate that is extracted from different plants.
- According to Greek mythology, the mint plant originated from a beautiful water nymph named Minthe who attracted the attention of Hades, the ruler of the underworld.
- During the Middle Ages, mint leaves were ground into a powder and used to whiten teeth.
- In Central America, the plant is known as *yerba buena*, meaning "good herb."



## Mint, Melon, Cucumber Salsa on Salmon

*From Executive Chef Barb Peters at The Heartland Spa in Gilman, Illinois*

*Makes 8 servings*

2 cups honeydew melon  
2 cups cucumber  
4 teaspoons mint  
4 teaspoons olive oil  
1 pinch red pepper flakes  
salt and pepper to taste

32 ounces salmon  
6 cups couscous,  
cooked  
mint sprigs and diced  
tomatoes to garnish



1. Seed and dice the melon and cucumber. Try to make all the pieces the same size—about  $\frac{1}{4}$ ".
2. Chop fresh mint into chiffonade, or thinly sliced strips.
3. Combine melon, cucumber, mint, oil, red pepper flakes, and salt and pepper to taste.
4. Grill salmon steaks.
5. Serve salmon steaks on a bed of couscous, covered with the salsa mixture, and garnish with mint sprigs and diced tomatoes.

the country. La Posada de Santa Fe Resort & Spa in New Mexico features a healing treatment called the Renewing Botanical Pedicure (Blue Mint Foot Repair) that includes a foot soak, paraffin dip, exfoliation and massage for tired feet and legs. A Chocolate Mint Body Wrap from Hilton Short Hills Hotel and Spa in Short Hills, New Jersey, combines mint and chocolate aromatic oils to soften the skin, and relax the body and spirit. Try the Frothy Spearmint Scrub, a signature treatment at St. Julien Hotel & Spa in Boulder, Colorado, to invigorate, heal and cleanse from top to bottom. Calistoga, California-based Lincoln Avenue Spa offers Mint Mud, a refreshing and cooling summer treat that softens the skin.

## Can't miss with mint

Use mint to add cool treatments to a spa menu or to flavor a chocolate dessert. Pair a peppermint pedicure with a tall mint julep for complete pampering. Or sprinkle minced mint leaves over tomato slices for a light, refreshing salad. Any way you chop it, mint adds an unmistakable flavor. ✂

