

# LEEK



**LEEKs** belong to the lily family, along with onions, garlic, scallions, and chives. Leeks taste and smell milder than onions and sweeten as they cook. In the Northeast leeks take several months to mature. They are planted in the spring and are harvested in the fall and winter months.

## STORAGE

◆ Store leeks unwashed and untrimmed wrapped in a damp cloth or paper towel, in the refrigerator. They will keep for **2-3 weeks** stored this way.

## PREPARATION

- ◆ The dark green leaves of the leek are too tough to eat. Cut the leek just before the light green stem begins to darken. Discard the leek top or use it for soup stock.
- ◆ Trim the roots of the **white bulb-end** and peel off the outside layer. Cut the trimmed leek in half or in rounds and rinse thoroughly under running water.
- ◆ Dirt and sand tends to collect deep in the leaves, so make sure you **rinse them well**. You can also chop the leek, soak in a bowl of warm water, and agitate with your fingers to loosen dirt between the layers.
- ◆ When leeks are fresh you can use most of the light green leaves and the white stem (down to the roots). If the leek seems tough, only use the lightest part.
- ◆ Leeks can be eaten raw, but they are **best cooked**. You can **braise, steam, grill, sauté,** or **roast** leeks. They are also a great addition to salads, casseroles, stews, stocks, stir-fries and quiches. Use them anywhere you would use onions, although their **delicate sweet flavor deserves its own special recognition**.

### ***Nutritional Information***

Leeks contain Vitamins C and K. Vitamin C is important in immune response, wound healing, and allergic reactions. Vitamin C also helps with iron absorption. Vitamin K is involved in blood clotting.

# Leek Recipes

## Potato Leek Soup

- 1 Tablespoon oil
- 6 leeks, roots and tough green parts removed, sliced, and then washed thoroughly
- 4 medium potatoes, washed and thinly sliced
- 1 teaspoon thyme leaves, fresh or dried
- 4-5 cups soup stock, brought to a boil in a small saucepan, and kept simmering
- 1 cup milk or cream
- 2 Tablespoons sour cream or yogurt
- Salt and pepper to taste
- 1 Tablespoon chopped fresh parsley or chives



In a soup pot, heat oil, add leeks and sauté 5 minutes. Add potatoes, thyme, and simmering stock, simmer about 25 minutes or until potatoes are tender. You can puree the soup in a blender or leave it chunky (return soup to the pot from blender if you pureed it). Gradually add the milk or cream and the sour cream or yogurt stirring constantly. Season with salt and pepper and heat through but do not boil. Add the parsley or chives and serve.

Recipe adapted from [FoodBook for a Sustainable Harvest](#), by Elizabeth Henderson and David Stern, copyright 1994 by Elizabeth Henderson and David Stern.

## Savory Leek Tart

- 3 Tablespoons unsalted butter
- 1½ - 2 Tablespoons water
- 3 pounds leeks, roots and tough green parts removed, sliced into 1/4 inch rounds, and washed thoroughly
- 8 sprigs of thyme
- Salt and pepper to taste
- 4 eggs, beaten
- 1 cup milk
- 1 quiche or tart crust, store bought or homemade
- ½ cup grated cheese



Preheat oven to 400 degrees. In a large pan, slowly heat butter and water. When butter melts, add leeks, thyme, salt and pepper. Cover and cook over medium heat for 10 minutes. Stir occasionally to prevent sticking. In a separate bowl, combine beaten eggs and milk. Add leek mixture, stir. Pour leek mixture into crust, sprinkle cheese on top. Bake 45-50 minutes or until the center of the tart is firm.

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## Leeks in Olive Oil

- 1/3 cup olive oil
- 2 pounds leeks, roots and tough green parts removed, sliced into 3/4 inch rounds, and washed thoroughly
- 2 small carrots, peeled, halved and sliced
- 1/3 cup uncooked rice
- 1½ teaspoons sugar
- ½ teaspoon salt
- 1 1/2 cups water
- Juice of half a lemon



In a heavy skillet, heat olive oil. Stir in leeks and carrots. Cook covered for 30 minutes, stirring occasionally. Add rice, sugar, salt, lemon juice and water. Cover and simmer for 30 minutes, checking occasionally to make sure there is enough liquid (if not, add more water). When cooked, it should be very moist but not watery. Serve cold with a sprinkling of lemon juice.

Recipe adapted from [Urban Organics Today](#) Newsletter, Vancouver, Canada, April 12-18, 1999.