

Spicy Kale Chips

Adapted from Cathy Elton's recipe <http://www.whatwouldcathyeat.com/2010/09/spicy-kale-chips/> This is a great snack to bring to a party; people will forget about that bowl of potato chips! Dry cayenne powder or tabasco/pepper sauce work equally well here; adjust the spice to suit your level of tolerance. I prefer lacinato over curly kale for ease of use; curly kale tends to fall to pieces at the edges. -Janice Janostak-

1 bunch lacinato or russian kale

2-4 T extra-virgin olive oil or good-quality vegetable oil, plus extra to coat baking sheets

1/4 tea. finely ground sea salt, or to taste

1/8 - 1/4 teaspoon cayenne powder, *or* a few drops of tabasco sauce/ hot pepper sauce to taste

freshly cracked or ground black pepper to taste (optional)

1) Preheat oven to 325 degree (F); arrange 2 oven racks in the center of the oven, but allow some air space between for proper heat distribution and circulation. Lightly coat 2-3 large baking sheets with oil (omit this step if using nonstick sheets) and set aside.

2) If the kale has been rinsed beforehand, shake it thoroughly and allow to air dry until there is little or no surface moisture. (Cathy Elton recommends the kale be "bone dry" but I don't find it necessary; a tiny bit of surface moisture adds a slight chewiness to the texture.)

3) Tear the leaves in large pieces from the stems, and put in a generously-sized bowl, such as an enlarged "salad" bowl. Coat with the olive oil by turning with a spoon and/or with your hands, "massaging" individual pieces* until all are well-coated (100% coverage is not necessary however.)

4) Sprinkle the seasonings over the leaves and give another few turns to distribute evenly. Place the kale pieces on the baking sheets in batches; if necessary, uncurl the pieces so they lay flat on the pan. Load up your trays as long as the leaves don't overlap; place the baking sheets on the racks in the oven, and bake for approximately 7-10 minutes, checking frequently at that point.

5) To determine if the chips are done, push individual pieces of kale across the tray; if a piece slides easily on the tray and is stiff rather than soft or limp, it's done. If the leaves crumble to pieces at the first touch or are mostly brown in color they are overbaked; (check a minute or two earlier next time.)

6) Remove individual chips from the baking sheet to a plate, bowl or airtight container as they are ready; return the rest to the oven as necessary. Continue as above with the rest of the kale in batches. (The chips so cool quickly on the plate or container that new layers don't cause the ones below to go soggy.) Serve immediately, or store in an airtight container for no more than a week.