

Effect of cooking on the nutritive value of common food plants of Tanzania: Part 1—Vitamin C in some of the wild green leafy vegetables

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[N. Sreeramulu](#), [Godwin D Ndossi](#), [K. Mtotomwema](#)

Abstract

The vitamin C (ascorbic acid) content of fresh and cooked material of sixteen varieties of wild leafy vegetables was estimated. In fresh leaves, the vitamin varied from 204 mg/100 g fresh weight in *Moringa oleifera* to 0.7 mg in *Emilia javanica*. When 20 mg samples were cooked in 400 ml of water, the vitamin C content decreased considerably. Losses observed ranged from 98.5% (*Moringa oleifera*) to nil (*Emilia javanica*). Smaller losses of the vitamin were observed when vegetable samples were cooked in 100 ml of water. Since most leafy vegetables are cooked prior to consumption, it is recommended that the vegetables are cooked in small amounts of water for short periods to minimise loss of vitamin C and that the cooking water be consumed if no bitter compounds are present.