

## Microgreens or Vegetable Confetti

### Germinating and with upto 4 leaves

PRIYA MENON

Good things come in small packages. Well, that's true at least where microgreens are concerned. Power packed with nutrients, these seedlings are now garnishing dishes at star hotels, sold at grocery stores and being grown on windowsills.

Microgreens, or vegetable confetti, are seedlings of any herb or vegetable that has edible leaves, such as red cabbage, cilantro and mustard. However, they need to be harvested within seven days of germination, when a maximum of four leaves have sprouted.

After three decades of social service, when N Vidhyadharan decided to try his hand at agriculture in his one-acre plot close to Chenglepet, he was not happy growing just paddy and groundnuts. In June 2014, he began growing microgreens. "I grew arugula and red amaranthus. It is easy as you just need to plant them in shallow pots and they require little water and sunlight," says the 51-year-old, who then launched *Adhithya Microgreens*, supplying it to hotels in Chennai. "You can use it to garnish curries or add to omelettes," says Vidhyadharan, who stopped selling it last November but plans to start again by February as there is now a demand for it.

Seema Balakrishnan began growing it in her Velachery house after hearing of its nutritional benefits. "I mix it in salads, and use it as garnish. Each microgreen has its own flavour, which is a fresher and more enhanced version of what the adult vegetable tastes like," says the motivational trainer. You can also have a dish made entirely out of microgreens. For instance, garnet amaranth makes for an excellent

dish in itself.

With the growing demand, some supermarkets have begun stocking it. *Green Goblin*, a distribution company for exotic fruits and vegetables, delivers it to your doorstep. So you can get 50g of amaranth for Rs. 160, mustard for Rs. 150, and mixed lettuce for Rs. 190. "Everything is grown in our family-owned farms in Maharashtra and we ensure that the cold chain is not broken so that it is fresh," says Aditi Vasu, proprietor *Green Goblin*.

Dietician Meenakshi Bajaj says microgreens are low in calories, rich in vitamin B2, folic acid, minerals and antioxidants. "They are 40 times higher in vital nutrients than their mature counterparts," she says. "The red cabbage microgreen has 147mg vitamin C per 100g while the mature cabbage has 57mg." Microgreens also contain fat-soluble vitamins, A, E and K. "For maximum nutritional benefit add extra virgin olive oil or roasted gingelly oil seeds to the microgreen salad," says Bajaj.

The nutrient profile of the microgreen depends on that of the original vegetable. "Any microgreen will provide vitamin C. The adult requirement is 40mg per day but the least you can get is 20mg of vitamin C per 100gm of microgreens," says Bajaj. The radish microgreen has 126mg of anti-sterility vitamin E per 100g, whereas the adult requirement per day is only 15mg.

Only people with renal or heart ailments should refrain from consuming microgreens, says Bajaj. "If you are on potassium sparing diuretics, you should not eat it. But otherwise, any amount of microgreen you consume is good for the body," she says.

### *Homo erectus*

Laziness, paired with an inability to adapt to a changing climate, may have wiped out the *Homo erectus*, an extinct species of primitive humans, a study has found.

An archaeological excavation of ancient human populations in the Arabian Peninsula during the Early Stone Age, found that *Homo erectus* used 'least-effort strategies' for tool making and collecting resources.

"They really don't seem to have been pushing themselves," said Ceri Shipton, from the Australian National

University.

"I don't get the sense they were explorers looking over the horizon. They didn't have that same sense of wonder that we have," said Shipton.

This was evident in the way the species made their stone tools and collected resources.

This is in contrast to the stone tool makers of later periods, including early *Homo sapiens* and Neanderthals.