

So what exactly are cut leafy greens?

According to the FDA, “cut leafy greens” are fresh leafy greens whose leaves have been cut, shredded, sliced, chopped, or torn. As such, “leafy greens” can include iceberg lettuce, romaine lettuce, leaf lettuce, butter lettuce, baby leaf lettuce (i.e., immature lettuce or leafy greens), escarole, endive, spring mix, spinach, cabbage, kale, arugula and chard.

The term “leafy greens” does not include herbs such as cilantro or parsley.

But that’s only part of the story. There’s also the distinction between a “raw agricultural product” and a “processed” food item.

If cut leafy greens fit the definition of a “raw agricultural product,” they don’t have to be kept at 41 degrees F or cooler.

Leafy greens that have only been cut from their root in the field (this is sometimes called a “harvest cut”) with no additional cutting, shredding, slicing, chopping, or tearing are not cut leafy greens;

Leafy greens that simply have the stem, stalk, or the butt of the core trimmed are not cut leafy greens. This would apply to heads of lettuce and cabbages or whole clumps of leaf lettuce or spinach, for example. In all cases, the exterior leaves may be discarded.

If the core of a head of lettuce or cabbage is completely removed then the remaining leaves are cut leafy greens. But the entire plant harvested from the field would not be a cut leafy green.

If exterior leaves are removed and discarded, the head or clump is still not a cut leafy green. But if someone is snipping or tearing leaves off one by one to use as food (and the core of head lettuce or cabbage is still intact), the snipped or torn leaves are a cut leafy green. However, the remaining head or clump is not a cut leafy green.