All it took was a bowl of Lucky Charms to realize I had lost my glow. I was no longer the quiet, but cheery, girl who smiled at others as I walked down the halls of my high school. Instead of coming home only to change into my leotard before rushing off to the dance studio, I came home to change into my sweats, grab my secret stash of Oreos, and isolate myself in my room. Tiny, red craters covered my dull, gray face, replacing the smooth, vibrant, and olive-tone it used to be. That is when I stopped believing in Lucky the Leprechaun and started believing in monsters.

Green monsters, that is. For the non-health foodie, a green monster gets its name from the addition of raw leafy green vegetables, such as baby spinach, kale, or arugula, to a fruit smoothie. Dietitians everywhere praise the benefits of leafy green vegetables, encouraging everyone to incorporate them into their diet. The nutritional profile of dark leafy greens speaks for itself. Often considered superfoods, these vegetables are chock-full of nutrients, including vitamins A, C, E, K, and some of the B vitamins; minerals such as iron, calcium, potassium, and magnesium; phytonutrients of beta-carotene, lutein, and zeaxanthin; and even contain small amounts of omega-3 fatty acids. A Green Monster, then, is just a glass of pure health.

And I was anything but healthy, having lost my physiological, mental, and spiritual strength. I used to stare at my Lucky Charms cereal, hoping for some actual lucky charms to come my way. But making the switch from the red cereal box to the green smoothie was like being stopped at an intersection and getting the green arrow signaling that it’s safe to take the left turn, off the beaten path.

This path seemed scary, especially the thought of actually drinking greens, but what I gained went far beyond nutrients. The raw greens in the smoothie offer additional benefits, including an incredible energy boost, weight loss, better digestion and regularity, mental clarity, and clear, glowing skin. This is an easy way to add more vegetables to my diet- and not to mention they taste delicious. The addition of a banana and cocoa powder (along with other fruits) masks the bitterness of the greens, so my sweet tooth is satisfied and my body still gets the nutrients it needs. Starting each day with a Green Monster sets the tone for the day ahead, giving me strength to tackle the challenges that lie ahead.
I believe in Green Monsters. I believe in their power to aid in transformation, their power to heal, both inside and out, and their power to empower. From being the girl who once had to catch her breath after climbing the stairs, I have become the girl who channels her morning Monster, turning on “Beast Mode” upon entering the gym. I believe that healthy can also be delicious and that monsters aren’t so scary after all.

By Sarah Campisi