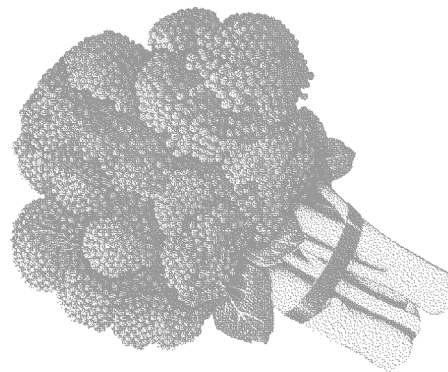




Vegetables for Wellness: Kentucky Broccoli

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Kentucky-grown broccoli is a treat, and we can enjoy its fresh flavor from May through early July and from October through mid-November. Broccoli, which has become popular in the United States only since World War II, derives its name from an Italian word meaning *sprout* or *shoot*—a reference to the flower shoots that develop on the plant's stem. As a member of the cabbage family, it is related to Brussels sprouts and cauliflower as well as cabbage. If you do not have a garden of your own, farmers' markets offer, along with other seasonal fruits and vegetables, broccoli picked at the peak of ripeness.

Nutrition Facts

Broccoli is packed with vitamins and minerals that promote health, and it also contains phytochemicals that help fight disease. A half-cup serving of cut broccoli has more fiber (1 gram) than a slice of whole-wheat bread, and broccoli is low in fat and calories (only 22 calories when cooked). Research shows that individuals who eat diets that are high in fiber and low in fat have a lower risk of heart disease and certain cancers—good reason to try to eat broccoli at least once a week, especially when it is in season.

Broccoli is a good source of vitamin A, which is needed for vision, normal growth, reproduction, and a healthy immune system. Vitamin A is also an antioxidant, which means it helps fight disease. Since the leaves of broccoli contain much more vitamin A than the buds, they, too, are worth adding to the diet of Kentuckians.

Broccoli is also an excellent source of vitamin C (ascorbic acid), which plays a vital role in fighting infection, keeping gums healthy, and healing wounds. Just one serving of broccoli provides over 100 percent of our daily need for vitamin C. And, vitamin C, like vitamin A, is a disease-fighting antioxidant.

Cruciferous vegetables like broccoli are known for containing isothiocyanates and indoles,

phytochemicals that are thought to bolster the body's natural ability to ward off cancer. Green vegetables, including broccoli, contain lutein, another phytochemical with health benefits.

Selection

Choose tender, young, dark green stalks with tightly closed buds. Buds with yellow flowers or wilting or thick stems indicate the broccoli is old and tough. Farmers' markets generally have a good selection of broccoli to pick from if you want to freeze broccoli for later use.

Storage

Store broccoli, unwashed, in perforated plastic bags in the refrigerator, where it will store well for three to five days. The shorter the storage time, the higher broccoli's nutritional value and the better tasting it will be. Wash broccoli just before using because it will mold if left wet.

Preparation

Wash broccoli under cool running water. Don't soak it, because soaking leaches out valuable vitamins and minerals. Trim the leaves and peel the stalk. Cut the stalk into 1-inch diagonal pieces for faster cooking. One-and-a-half pounds of broccoli equals 4 half-cup servings. A one-bushel carton of broccoli contains about 25 pounds and yields 24 to 25 pints of frozen broccoli. When cooking broccoli, use a small amount of water and cook it only until it is bright green and tender—as briefly as possible to preserve both the crisp texture and the nutrients. If broccoli is overcooked, it will turn a dark green—almost gray—color. This makes it unpleasant to look at, smell, and eat.

To steam: After washing broccoli, place it on a rack above boiling water and steam approximately

6 to 8 minutes. For crisp, tender, broccoli, steam fresh broccoli for 4 to 6 minutes; frozen broccoli should be steamed for 8 to 10 minutes. Drain and rinse with cold water.

To boil: After washing, place broccoli in a saucepan with 1 inch of boiling water and 1/2 teaspoon salt. Cook for 5 minutes, then cover and cook for 10 to 15 minutes more until broccoli is the desired tenderness. Broccoli can also be cooked with the lid on the entire 15 to 20 minutes. To allow the unpleasant odor associated with cruciferous vegetables to escape, lift the lid a few times. This also protects the green color of the vegetable. Drain and rinse with cold water.

To microwave: After washing, place broccoli in a microwave-safe dish. Add 1 inch of water and cover the dish with a glass lid or plastic wrap. Microwave it for 3 to 4 minutes or until it is crisp-tender. Remove and rinse with cold water.

Broccoli Salad Supreme

4 cups raw broccoli, chopped
1 cup celery, chopped
1/4 cup green onion, chopped
1/2 pound bacon, fried crisp and crumbled
2/3 cup slivered almonds, toasted
1 cup seedless green grapes
1 cup seedless red grapes
1/3 cup sugar
1 cup mayonnaise
1 tablespoon vinegar

Toss together the vegetables, bacon, almonds, and grapes. Mix the sugar, mayonnaise, and vinegar to make a dressing. Pour dressing over the mixture and stir gently to allow the dressing to evenly coat the ingredients. So that the flavors will blend, refrigerate the mixture overnight before serving or as time allows. *Nutritional Analysis:* 280 calories, 7 g protein, 10 g carbohydrate, 2 g fiber, 24 g fat, 25 mg cholesterol, 360 mg sodium. Yield: 14 servings.
—From the Kenton County Extension Service.

Broccoli Stir-Fry

2 tablespoons sesame seed oil
1/2 cup walnuts, broken or chopped coarsely
1/4 cup green onions, chopped with tops
4 cups broccoli florets
1/4 cup red pepper strips
2 tablespoons lite soy sauce

In a large, heavy skillet heat oil until hot. Add walnuts and onions and stir-fry for 1 minute, tossing constantly. Add broccoli and continue to toss for 3 to 4 minutes. Add red pepper strips and soy sauce and continue to cook 1 minute longer. Serve immediately. *Nutritional Analysis:* 120 calories, 3 g protein, 5 g carbohydrate, 2 g fiber, 11 g fat, 220 mg sodium. Yield: 6 servings.

Sweet and Sour Broccoli

Vegetable Salad:

2 cups broccoli florets
2 cups cauliflower florets
1/2 lb fresh mushrooms, cut in half
1 bunch green onions, chopped

Dressing:

1/2 cup sugar
1/2 cup vegetable oil
2 tablespoons wine vinegar
1 teaspoon celery seed
3/4 teaspoon salt
1 teaspoon paprika
2 tablespoons green onion, minced
Dash garlic powder

Combine vegetables for salad. Combine dressing ingredients and shake vigorously in a tightly sealed container. Pour dressing over vegetables. Chill at least 3 hours before serving. Salt may be omitted if desired. *Nutritional Analysis:* 210 calories, 4 g protein, 25 g carbohydrate, 4 g fiber, 12 g fat, 510 mg sodium. Yield: 6 servings.

For additional in-season recipes, check the home page of Family and Consumer Sciences Extension, University of Kentucky College of Agriculture, on the Web at <www.ca.uky.edu/agcollege/fcs>.

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