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[healthy eating]

CRUCIFEROUS VEGGIES

Arugula, Broccoli, Collards, Oh My!



ALL VEGETABLES are not created equal. It is certainly preferable to eat any vegetable over less-nutritious foods. But when it comes to the nutritional value of vegetables, there is definitely a pecking order.

Cruciferous vegetables are at the head of the class. They are called cruciferous because their four-petaled flowers resemble a crucifix, or cross. The category is broad and includes such things as broccoli, Brussels sprouts, head cabbage, cauliflower, collards, kale, rutabaga, turnips, and watercress.

These vegetables are superstars in part because they contain nutrients and compounds that may help protect against colon and rectal cancer. They are also terrific sources of calcium, iron, and folic acid.

While these vegetables are strong on the nutritional front, they also are strong in flavor and can produce strong kitchen odors. Here are a few tips to help you get

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cruciferous vegetables into your diet in delicious ways.

Arugula. This is a sharp-tasting green and can be cooked or eaten raw. To temper some of the peppery flavor, combine arugula in a salad with a few leaves of butter or Bibb lettuce. Add diced pears, apples, or sliced oranges for sweetness. Add a few nuts for crunch, and make a dressing of mild olive oil mixed with fresh lemon juice and a dash of honey.

Broccoli. While it is one of the more popular cruciferous vegetables, basic broccoli can always use a little boost. For a quick snack, blanch some broccoli by placing it in boiling water for a minute or so. Serve with a dip made from low-fat yogurt mixed with garlic, dried basil, oregano, and a few spoonfuls of low-fat mayonnaise to thicken the dip's consistency.

Brussels sprouts. After much experimenting, I have found that Brussels sprouts are best roasted. Trim the Brussels sprouts with a small knife and mark an "X" on the top of each sprout. Quickly blanch them in a pot of boiling water for 2 minutes. Drain. Toss the sprouts with a small amount of olive oil, salt, and pepper. Preheat the oven to 400°F. Place the sprouts in a single layer on a baking sheet. Roast the sprouts until the outside is crunchy and brown, about 10 to 12 minutes.

Cabbage. Make a slaw! Toss about 1 cup each of red and green shredded cabbage with ½ cup each of diced apples, red pepper, and carrots. Add 2 Tbsp. raisins.

Broccoli with Sun-Dried Tomatoes and Pine Nuts

6 servings/serving size: ½ cup
Preparation time: 20 minutes
Cooking time: 8 minutes

- 1½ lb. fresh broccoli, separated into florets and stems peeled and sliced thinly
- 2 tsp. olive oil
- ½ cup diced red onion
- 10 rehydrated sun-dried tomatoes, diced (Do not use oil-packed.)
- ⅓ cup reduced-sodium, low-fat chicken broth
- 1 tsp. lemon juice
- ¼ cup toasted pine nuts

1. Fill a large pot with water and bring to a boil. Add the broccoli and turn off the heat. Let the broccoli stand in the water for 1 minute. Drain the broccoli and immediately add to a large bowl filled with ice water. Let the broccoli stand in the water for 1 minute. Drain again and set aside.

2. Heat the oil in a large skillet over medium heat. Add the red

onion and sauté for 3 to 4 minutes. Add the sun-dried tomatoes and sauté for 30 seconds. Add the broth and lemon juice, cover, and steam for 1 minute. Add the broccoli and cover and steam for 1 to 2 minutes. Place the broccoli mixture in a serving dish and top with the toasted pine nuts.

Nutrition Facts

Serving Size ½ cup
Vegetable Exchanges 2
Fat Exchanges 1

Amount per Serving

Calories 95 **Calories From Fat** 50

Total Fat 6 grams

Saturated Fat 1 gram

Cholesterol 0 milligrams

Sodium 140 milligrams

Total Carbohydrate 10 grams

Dietary Fiber 4 grams

Sugars 3 grams

Protein 5 grams

Pour a dressing of 2 Tbsp. canola oil, 1 Tbsp. apple cider vinegar, 1 tsp. fresh lemon juice, 1 tsp. honey, and 1 tsp. poppy seeds over the whole thing and toss well.

Cauliflower. One of my favorite ways to make cauliflower more palatable is to prepare it with Indian spices. Quickly steam

2 cups of florets for about 3 minutes in 2 inches of boiling water. Drain. Sauté 1 small onion in 1 tsp. of canola oil in a large non-stick skillet. Add ½ tsp. turmeric, ½ tsp. ground ginger, and ¼ tsp. ground cardamom. Sauté for 1 minute. Add 1 clove garlic and sauté 1 minute. Add one (15 oz.) can diced tomatoes and the

steamed cauliflower. Cover and cook on medium-low heat for 3 minutes.

Collards and kale. Greens can be particularly overwhelming in terms of flavor, so the trick is to serve them up in small, healthy doses. I often add them to frittatas and omelets. Heat 2 tsp. olive oil over medium heat. Add ½ cup diced onion and 2 garlic cloves, minced. Add 3 cups torn, washed, and cleaned collard greens or kale and cover and cook for about 8 minutes. Remove from the skillet.

Add cooking spray to the skillet. In a bowl, beat 2 eggs and 4 egg whites along with 2 Tbsp. nonfat milk and 2 Tbsp. Parmesan cheese. Add to the skillet. Add the greens mixture on top and spread it out well and cook without stirring for about 10 minutes over medium heat. Preheat the broiler. Transfer the skillet to the broiler and broil for 1 minute until the top is browned.

Watercress. I saved the simplest for last! Watercress can be quickly stir-fried with just 1 tsp. oil for 2 minutes until it just wilts. Or add it as a substitute for lettuce to your favorite sandwich.

Go for the best; crunch on some cruciferous vegetables today!

The latest cookbook by Robyn Webb, MS, LN, Italian Diabetic Meals In 30 Minutes—Or Less!, is published by the American Diabetes Association. This, as well as other books by Robyn, can be ordered from the Association's online bookstore at <http://store.diabetes.org> or by calling 1-800-232-6733.

supermarket finds: product of the month

Salpica Fire-Roasted Salsas

Salsa isn't just for chips. It's also a great no-fat, low-calorie topper for vegetables. One of the newest comes from Rick Bayless, owner of Chicago's famous Frontera Grill restaurant. Bayless has created a salsa that has it all. Zesty and with a kick, these salsas come in many flavors, including my favorite, Mango Peach. Available on your grocer's shelf for \$4.95. Distributed by Frontera Foods in Chicago. For more information call 1-800-509-4441, extension 120, or check them out online at www.fronterakitchens.com/shopping/food/salpica/salsas.

—R.W.

Nutrition Facts

Serving Size 2 Tbsp.

Servings per container 15

Amount per Serving

Calories 25 Calories From Fat 0

Total Fat 0 grams

Saturated Fat 0 grams

Cholesterol 0 milligrams

Sodium 150 milligrams

Total Carbohydrate 5 grams

Dietary Fiber 0 grams

Sugars 2 grams

Protein 0 grams



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