
Broccoli 101

More than just a superfood.



How to Store Broccoli:

When choosing broccoli, look for tight florets with no yellowing. Avoid heads that show a few tiny yellow flowers blooming, as they will be bitter. Wrap broccoli loosely in a plastic bag and keep it in the crisper drawer of your refrigerator. It keeps for over a week, but is tastier and more firm if it is used within a few days.

Watch out for Critters:

Organic broccoli in particular seems to attract small green worms hiding in its depths. To rid your broccoli of these critters, soak the head upside down in cold salted water (1 teaspoon salt to 8 cups of water) for 30 minutes. Any critters will float to the top.



Broccoli is a cool weather crop, so it's only in season in the spring and fall

Handling:

The leaves, stems, and florets of a broccoli plant are edible, meaning that you can eat the whole thing. First, strip the stalks of the leaves. The leaves can be prepared like collards or kale. Break the head into florets that are your desired size. Then use a peeler or paring knife to cut the tough skin off the broccoli stalk, and cut into equal size pieces. The stalks will require a few extra minutes of cooking time.

Substitutes:

Cauliflower, broccoflower, Romanesco, or broccoli raab.

Best Uses:

Salads

Soups and stews Add to casseroles Pasta Dishes

Quiche/Frittata

Pizza topping

Stir Fry

Simple Cooked Side Dish

Gratin

Roasted or grilled

Raw on a vegetable platter

5 Ways to Cook

Broccoli:

To figure out when broccoli is “done” is a matter of taste. Some people like it bright green with a bit of crispiness. Some people like it cooked a few minutes longer until tender. Cook it a few more minutes, and you can have a mushy morsel that falls apart. As a general rule, cook it until you can pierce the stem with a sharp knife.

Cooking Method #1 - Roasting

Heat the oven to 425°F. Make sure the broccoli is as dry as possible. Toss the broccoli florets and stems with a few teaspoons of oil and 1/2 teaspoon of salt. Spread the broccoli on a foil-lined baking sheet in a single layer. Roast for 20 to 25 minutes, until broccoli is crunchy and you can see deep caramelized spots. Serve immediately.



Roasted Broccoli

Cooking Method #2: Steaming in the Microwave

Place the broccoli florets and stems in a microwave-safe dish and pour 2 to 3 tablespoons of water over top. Cover with a dinner plate and microwave on HIGH for 3 to 4 minutes. Remove the lid carefully and check if the broccoli is tender. Microwave in additional 1-minute bursts if necessary.

Cooking Method #3: Steaming on the Stovetop

Fill the pot with a few inches of water and insert a steamer basket over top. Bring the water to a simmer over medium-high heat. Add the broccoli florets and stems and cover. Steam for 4 to 5 minutes, until tender.

Cooking Method #4 - Sautéing

Make sure the broccoli is as dry as possible. Drizzle a skillet with oil and set over high to medium-high heat. Add the florets and a big pinch of salt. Toss to coat with oil. Add the stems 1 minute later. Continue cooking, stirring frequently, until the broccoli is bright green and tender.

Cooking Method #5: Blanching

Prepare a bowl of ice water and have it next to the stove. Bring a large pot of water to a rapid boil. Add a heaping tablespoon of salt. Add the broccoli florets and cook until crisp-tender, 1 to 1 1/2 minutes. Remove with a slotted spoon and plunge immediately in the ice water. Let the water come back to a boil, then cook the stems until they are also crisp-tender, 1 1/2 to 2 minutes. If you would like softer vegetables, cook for an additional 30 seconds.

How to Freeze Broccoli:

Don't freeze your broccoli raw. But blanching is a necessary step to preserve the bright green color and tasty flavor. Both stems and florets can be frozen, but blanch them separately.

1. Blanch in boiling water for three minutes or steam for five minutes.
2. Remove the broccoli quickly after cooking and dunk in ice water for the same amount of time you cooked it.
3. Dry the broccoli as best as you can using either a salad spinner or drying on a towel.
4. You can individually quick freeze broccoli on a parchment-lined tray and then package

into air-tight freezer bags. This method works best if the broccoli is thoroughly dry. Otherwise, package broccoli in freezer bags in portion-size amounts.

5. To freeze stems, chop the soft inner layers into bite-size pieces. Blanch and chill using the same procedure above. Freeze separately from florets, since you'll most likely prepare them in different dishes.

Suggested Recipes:

Beef and Broccoli Stir Fry

Adapted from Food.com

Ingredients:

3 tablespoons cornstarch, divided

1/2 cup water

2 tablespoons water, divided

3/4 teaspoon garlic powder

1 lb boneless round steak or 1 lb chuck steak, cut into thin 3-inch strips

2 tablespoons vegetable oil, divided

4 cups broccoli florets

1 small onion, cut into wedges

1 1/3 cup reduced sodium soy sauce

2 tablespoons brown sugar

1 teaspoon ground ginger

hot cooked rice

Directions:

In a bowl, combine 2 tablespoons cornstarch, 2 tablespoons water and garlic powder until smooth. Add beef and toss.

In a large skillet or wok over medium high heat, stir-fry beef in 1 tablespoon oil until beef reaches desired doneness; remove and keep warm.

Stir-fry broccoli and onion in remaining oil for 4-5 minutes. Return beef to pan.

Combine soy sauce, brown sugar, ginger and remaining cornstarch and water until smooth;

add to the pan. Cook and stir for 2 minutes. Serve over rice.

Roasted Broccoli with Optional Garlic

Recipe adapted from Cook's Illustrated, January 2008

Trim away the outer peel from the broccoli stalk, otherwise it will turn tough when cooked. For Roasted Broccoli with Garlic, stir 1 tablespoon minced garlic into the olive oil before drizzling it over the broccoli.

Ingredients:

1 large head broccoli

3 T extra virgin olive oil

1/2 t. table salt

1/2 t. sugar

Ground black pepper

Lemon wedges for serving

Directions:

Adjust oven rack to lowest position, place large rimmed baking sheet on rack, and heat oven to 500 degrees. Cut broccoli at juncture of florets and stems; remove outer peel from stalk. Cut stalk into 2- to 3-inch lengths and each length into 1/2-inch-thick pieces. Cut crowns into 4 wedges if 3-4 inches in diameter or 6 wedges if 4-5 inches in diameter. Place broccoli in large bowl; drizzle with oil and toss well until evenly coated. Sprinkle with salt, sugar, and pepper to taste and toss to combine.

Working quickly, remove baking sheet from oven. Carefully transfer broccoli to baking sheet and spread into even layer, placing flat sides down. Return baking sheet to oven and roast until stalks are well browned and tender and florets are lightly browned, 9 to 11 minutes. Transfer to serving dish and serve immediately with lemon wedges.

Slow Cooker Broccoli and Cheese Soup

Adapted from www.wellplated.com

Ingredients:

5 cups chopped broccoli florets

1 cup grated carrots

1 medium yellow onion, finely diced
3 cloves garlic, minced
2 ounces reduced fat cream cheese
1 teaspoon dried oregano
1/4 teaspoon freshly grated nutmeg
2 1/2 cups reduced sodium chicken or vegetable broth
1 (12-ounce) can 2% evaporated milk
1/2 teaspoon kosher salt
1/4 teaspoon black pepper
1 (8-ounce) block sharp cheddar cheese, grated

Directions:

Place the broccoli, carrots, onion, and garlic in the bottom of 5-to-6-quart slow cooker. Top with the cream cheese, oregano, nutmeg, and chicken broth. Stir to evenly distribute the ingredients. Cover and cook on high for 2 hours or low for 4-6 hours, until the broccoli is tender.

Remove the lid and stir in the evaporated milk. With an immersion blender, puree about 3/4 of the soup, so that it is mostly smooth but still has a few chunks of broccoli remaining. Alternatively, you can puree the soup in 1 cup-sized batches in a food processor or blender. (Be careful—it's hot and prone to splatter!)

Recover the soup and let cook on low for 10 minutes until warmed through. Stir the salt, pepper, and grated cheese. Taste and add additional salt and pepper as desired. Recover and cook on high until the cheese is fully melted and the soup is hot, about 5 additional minutes. Serve warm.

Broccoli Salad

From Diana Pfaff

This is a church cookbook recipe — one of those long-time recipes you see at church potlucks that tastes so good, and you wish you had the recipe. I get lots of compliments on this salad by my boys. They don't like the raisins, but they LOVE the bacon! I have also seen this recipe with peanuts and shredded cheese added.

Ingredients:

1 lb. pkg. bacon
5 c. broccoli florets
1 c. raisins
1/4 c. sweet onion, diced fine
1/4 c. sunflower seeds (shelled)
1 c. Hellmann's mayonnaise, (we use Miracle Whip)
1/2 c. sugar (oh... that's why it tastes so good!)
1 T. white vinegar

Directions:

Cut bacon into 1 inch pieces and cook. While bacon cooks, cut broccoli into small pieces. Add raisins, diced onions and sunflower seeds. Drain grease off bacon. Let cool and add to broccoli mixture. In a small bowl, mix mayo, sugar and white vinegar for the dressing. Mix well. When dressing is creamy, pour over broccoli mixture. Mix well and serve cold.

One Pot Cheesy Chicken Broccoli and Rice

Casserole *Adapted from JoCooks.com*

Ingredients:

1 tbsp olive oil
1 small onion, chopped
2 chicken breasts, cut into small cubes
salt and pepper to taste
4-5 cloves garlic minced
3/4 cup rice
10 oz can cream of chicken soup
2 to 3 cups chicken broth
2 cups broccoli florets
1 cup cheddar cheese, shredded
1 tbsp fresh parsley chopped

Directions:

Heat the olive oil in a large skillet. Add chopped onion and cubed chicken. Cook on medium heat for a few minutes until the chicken starts to brown a bit. Season with salt and pepper to taste. Stir in garlic and cook for another 30 seconds until garlic gets aromatic. Add the rice, cream of chicken soup and chicken broth. Start with 2 cups of chicken broth and if more is needed add more until rice is fully cooked. Bring to a boil, then reduce heat and cook over medium heat until the rice is fully cooked, stirring occasionally, should take about 15 minutes or so. Taste for seasoning and adjust as necessary.

Add the broccoli florets and half the cheese then continue cooking for 2 more minutes, until broccoli softens a bit. Sprinkle over the top with remaining cheese and place the skillet under the broiler for a couple more minutes, just until it melts and starts to brown a bit. Garnish with fresh parsley and serve.