

**Seasonal Eating**  
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**Bring on the Broccoli**  
**May 2011**

President H. W. Bush may not have been a broccoli fan but he must be in the minority as the average person in the United States eats 4 ½ pounds of broccoli each year. As a cool weather crop, May is the perfect time to enjoy this tasty and versatile vegetable. In fact it is my sister-in-law's favorite vegetable and she enjoys it several times a week in various dishes. One great thing about broccoli is that it can be enjoyed raw or cooked so if you don't like it cooked, try it raw with a dip or in a salad.

Broccoli is one of the cruciferous vegetables which also include cabbage, kale, Brussels sprouts and cauliflower. There is some evidence to indicate that a diet rich in these vegetables can help reduce cancer risk. They are full of vitamins, fiber and phytochemicals that make them very nutritious. Broccoli is especially high in vitamin C and folate and is a good source of fiber and potassium. Choosing broccoli heads that are a dark green with a purplish or bluish hue may be higher in beta-carotene and vitamin C than the light green heads.

Broccoli has several cousins that are also good to try. Broccoflower is a cross between broccoli and cauliflower. It is sweeter in taste than either and has a head like cauliflower that is light green. Broccolini is a cross between broccoli and Chinese broccoli and is a little sweeter and more delicate than broccoli. Broccoli rabe (or sometimes called rapini) has smaller heads and more leaves. It can be very bitter so some people blanch it first, throw out the water and then cook it to serve.

To make your broccoli store longer, don't wash it until just before cooking. To remove any insects or worms that may be hiding, soak your broccoli upside down in cold salted water for a few minutes, rinse and prepare for your recipe. Make sure also that your broccoli heads are tightly closed and not flowering out or yellowed as this is a sign of age and they will be tougher and more pungent in flavor.

I love using broccoli in casseroles with chicken or ham, in salads and in stir fried dishes. My sister-in-law adds it to her Kung Pao Chicken as it makes a great addition to any Chinese style dish. Broccoli florets with about 1



½” of stem attached can also be roasted in the oven at 425 degrees F. for about 20-25 minutes. Toss with a little olive oil and sprinkle with salt and pepper before roasting. Another great thing about broccoli is that you can use the stems as well as the florets. The stems are great for making broccoli slaw. You can buy the stems already shredded or shred your own and use the florets for another dish. Below is a recipe for marinated vegetables that my mother often makes for summer potlucks and outdoor dinners. Sometimes she adds cooked shrimp or cubed chicken for more of a main dish salad. This is a great make-ahead dish, so give it a try with broccoli this month.

For more ideas on using broccoli and strawberries, come to the Seasonal Eating cooking demonstration on Wednesday, May 18 at 12:00 noon at the Extension Office. Call 684-5971 for more information or to register by the Monday before class and bring \$5 to class. You can also visit the Bedford County Extension website Seasonal Eating page for more recipes and information.

#### Mom's Marinated Vegetables

- 2 stalks broccoli, cut into florets
- 1/2 head cauliflower, cut into florets
- 8 oz. mushrooms, sliced
- 1/4 red onion, sliced into half moons
- 5 stalks celery, sliced diagonally into chunks
- 1 cup vegetable oil
- 1/2 cup white wine vinegar
- 1/2 cup sugar
- 1 tablespoon Italian seasoning
- 2 teaspoons dry mustard
- 1 teaspoon salt

In large container with a lid, combine the vegetables. In a bowl, whisk together oil, vinegar, sugar, Italian seasoning, mustard and salt. Pour over vegetables. Cover and chill 8 hours or overnight, stirring occasionally.