

Extension

Seasonal Eating Whitney Danhof, Extension Agent

Cole Crops for Cold Days November 2012

The term “cole” is derived from a Latin word meaning stem or cabbage and is where we get the name for the shredded cabbage salad, coleslaw. Cole crops is a general term used to describe several vegetables in the mustard family, including broccoli, Brussels sprouts, cabbage, cauliflower, collards, kale and kohlrabi. The cole crops enjoy cool seasons and are somewhat cold tolerant so are a great choice for the fall months.



While we think of coleslaw as a summer dish, cole crops can make heartier hot dishes as well. One of my favorite soups is creamy broccoli and cheese and I often order it with a sandwich

at restaurants for lunch. Cabbage sautéed with bacon is another favorite from this family. Collards and kale retain their texture when cooked and are great served with grits and a baked pork chop for a warm family meal. Broccoli and cauliflower are excellent stir fry vegetables that can be combined with thin strips of beef or chicken.

Just before you are ready to cook, it is important to wash your broccoli and cauliflower well, especially if home grown or from the farmers’ market, as insects can hide in the florets. You can soak the heads or florets in water with a little salt to remove any unwanted debris. Try to use these items within four days of purchase for best quality. For head cabbage and Brussels sprouts, just wash and remove any loose or damaged outer leaves. Use fresh Brussels sprouts or cabbage for raw recipes quickly while cabbage that will be cooked will store up to two weeks.

To help retain broccoli’s bright green color, cook it quickly and leave the pan uncovered for the first few minutes. To retain the whiteness of cauliflower, add a little milk or lemon juice when cooking. If the stalks are tough, the outer layer can be peeled off. Red cabbage is very susceptible to color change. Cook it with vinegar (or another acidic ingredient) or it will turn an ugly blue-gray color. Also be sure to use stainless steel knives and cookware to prevent color changes in the cabbage.

One of my newer favorites from this family is cauliflower. We didn’t have cooked cauliflower growing up – we were more of a broccoli family with cauliflower served raw on a vegetable tray. But now I’ve been enjoying this vegetable in all kinds of different dishes. At a potluck last year, I had the best cauliflower dish. It was baked with garlic and parmesan cheese and was fabulous. How many times do you come away from a potluck

dinner raving about the vegetable?! Another delicious combination is cauliflower and cheese and this Cauliflower Gratin makes the most of both ingredients. Cauliflower florets are layered with a creamy white sauce and cheese. Gruyere is a hard yellow cheese named after a town in Switzerland with a nutty, aged Swiss cheese flavor. It can be quite expensive so you can substitute a baby Swiss if you prefer. The panko crumb topping gives this dish a great crunch on top, perfectly finishing off the gratin.

For more ideas on using seasonal produce, visit the Bedford County Extension website (<https://utextension.tennessee.edu/bedford>). The Seasonal Eating Cooking Demonstration on Cole Crops will be held on Wednesday, November 14 at 12:00 noon at the Extension Office. Call the Office at 684-5971 to sign up and bring \$5.00 to cover the samples.

Cauliflower Gratin

- 1 large head cauliflower
- 2 tablespoons butter
- 2 tablespoons flour
- 1 1/4 cups milk
- Salt and pepper to taste
- 2 cups shredded Gruyère or Swiss cheese
- 1/2 cup grated parmesan cheese
- 1/4 cup panko bread crumbs

Trim the cauliflower and cut into florets. Steam the cauliflower in a large pot with a little water over medium-low heat until tender (or microwave with a little water until tender). Drain well and blot with paper towels to remove excess moisture. In a medium saucepan, melt butter. Whisk in flour and cook for a minute or two. Whisk in milk and bring to a boil. Cook for 3-4 minutes, allowing sauce to thicken. Season with salt and pepper to taste. Place drained cauliflower in a casserole dish sprayed with vegetable spray. Combine cheeses in a small bowl and top cauliflower with half of the cheese. Pour the white sauce over the cheese. Top with remaining cheese and breadcrumbs. Bake at 350 degrees for 20-30 minutes until bubbly and golden brown on top. You may need to broil the top for a minute at the end, if not browned.