

**CREATE** SNAP-ED  
**BETTER HEALTH**



extension.usu.edu

June 2020

# Broccoli

## Create Better Health Guide to Eating Fresh Fruits and Vegetables

*Lisa Lewis*, Extension Assistant Professor

**Utah Local Fresh Season:** Spring and Fall

**Availability:** Broccoli is a cool weather produce—so early spring or late fall are its best seasons. It is available in most grocery stores year-round

**Eating:** Broccoli has a fresh mild taste. It is good raw or cooked. Broccoli may be purchased fresh, canned, or frozen. It can be incorporated into many dishes.

**Selecting:** Broccoli is usually sold in a bunch. You can sometimes find pre-cut florets (heads), although the florets are often more expensive. Choose bunches that are dark green. Check two places for freshness, the tips or florets and the cut end at the bottom. The florets should be firmly attached to the stem, and should be a bright or light green color, not yellow or brown. The bottoms should not be overly dried out.

Good color indicates high nutrient value. Florets that are dark green, purplish, or bluish green contain more beta-carotene and vitamin C than paler or yellowing ones. Choose bunches with stalks that are very firm. Stalks that bend or seem rubbery are of poor quality. Avoid broccoli with open, flowering, discolored, or water-soaked bud clusters and tough, woody stems.

**Varieties of Broccoli:** Broccoli was first grown in the Italian province of Calabria and was given the name Calabrese. Today there are many varieties. In the United States, the most common type of broccoli is the Italian green or sprouting variety. Its green stalks are topped with umbrella-shaped clusters of purplish green florets.

**Cleaning and Preparing:** Wash broccoli under cool running water. Never allow it to sit in water as it will

lose water-soluble nutrients. Fresh broccoli is delicious raw or cooked.

**Storing:** Fresh broccoli can be stored in the refrigerator crisper at 32°F for a week to 10 days. Store broccoli unwashed in an open plastic bag in the refrigerator.

**Cooking:** Broccoli is very versatile; it is easy to serve raw in salads, or cooked. It also compliments soups and other vegetable dishes.

The best way to cook broccoli is to steam, cook in the microwave or stir-fry with a little broth or water. These methods are better than boiling. Some of the vitamin and mineral content is lost from the vegetable and ends up in the cooking water when broccoli is boiled.

**Steaming or boiling:** After cleaning, place chopped broccoli florets and/or stems (evenly sized pieces) into steamer or pan of boiling water. Steam or boil until individual pieces are tender enough to easily pierce through with a fork (about 5 minutes) or to desired consistency. Serve as a side dish with or without a scant dusting of parmesan cheese.

**Incorporating into other recipes:** Steam, cool, chop 1/4 - 1/2 inch sections and add to salad. Add small sized florets to lasagna or pasta sauce. Add a small amount to most any stir-fry. Include finely chopped pieces of broccoli when heating onions and garlic for a rice and beans dish.

**Nutrition Highlights:** Broccoli contains large amounts of vitamin C and beta-carotene, which are important antioxidants. Consuming foods high in antioxidants can reduce the risk of some forms of cancer and heart

disease. Broccoli is low fat, saturated fat free, low sodium, cholesterol free, high in vitamin C, high in folate, and a good source of dietary fiber and potassium.

**Growing:** Broccoli can be grown in Utah. For more information see Broccoli in the Garden, by Dan Drost. [https://digitalcommons.usu.edu/extension\\_curall/274/](https://digitalcommons.usu.edu/extension_curall/274/)

**Preserving:** Freezing is the best way to preserve broccoli. Broccoli, as well as all other vegetables, must be blanched (scalded) in boiling water before freezing. Un-blanched vegetables contain an active enzyme, which causes toughening and severe flavor and nutrient loss during freezing. Blanching reduces the enzyme activity. For more information go to <http://www.uga.edu/nchfp/how/freeze/broccoli.html>

### References:

1. <http://urbanext.illinois.edu/veggies/broccoli.cfm>
2. <https://fruitsandveggies.org/fruits-and-veggies/broccoli/>
3. [http://extension.usu.edu/files/publications/factsheet/HG\\_Garden\\_2005-01.pdf](http://extension.usu.edu/files/publications/factsheet/HG_Garden_2005-01.pdf)

### Hot Broccoli Dip

1 cup fresh broccoli heads or florets, chopped (about 6 ounces)  
1/4 cup onion, chopped  
1/4 cup red bell pepper, chopped  
1 ounce (1/4 cup) Parmesan cheese, grated  
1 clove garlic, pressed  
1 cup (4 ounces) shredded cheddar cheese  
1/2 cup fat-free sour cream  
1/2 cup fat-free mayonnaise  
1/8 teaspoon ground black pepper

Preheat oven to 375°F.

Chop broccoli, onion and bell pepper using knife or food chopper; place in 1-quart mixing bowl. Grate Parmesan cheese; add 2 tablespoons to vegetable mixture. Press garlic using a garlic press (or mince) and add to vegetables along with remaining ingredients, mixing well. Spoon into small baking dish. Bake 20-25 minutes or until heated through. Sprinkle remaining 2 tablespoons Parmesan cheese over top and surround with Pita Chips for serving.

### Broccoli Stir-Fry

2 tablespoons toasted sesame seed oil  
1/2 cup walnuts, broken or chopped coarsely  
1/4 cup chopped green onions with tops (optional)  
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. Makes six servings.

**Guide Editors:** Heidi LeBlanc and Debra Christofferson

**Additional Editors:** Marie Stosich, Gayla M. Johnson, Eileen Milligan, Michelle White

Utah State University is committed to providing an environment free from harassment and other forms of illegal discrimination based on race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age (40 and older), disability, and veteran's status. USU's policy also prohibits discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation in employment and academic related practices and decisions.

Utah State University employees and students cannot, because of race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age, disability, or veteran's status, refuse to hire; discharge; promote; demote; terminate; discriminate in compensation; or discriminate regarding terms, privileges, or conditions of employment, against any person otherwise qualified. Employees and students also cannot discriminate in the classroom, residence halls, or in on/off campus, USU-sponsored events and activities.

This publication is issued in furtherance of Cooperative Extension work, acts of May 8 and June 30, 1914, in cooperation with the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Noelle E. Cockett, Vice President for Extension and Agriculture, Utah State University. (FN/FoodSense/2010-01pr)

In its programs and activities, including in admissions and employment, Utah State University does not discriminate or tolerate discrimination, including harassment, based on race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age, genetic information, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, disability, status as a protected veteran, or any other status protected by University policy, Title IX, or any other federal, state, or local law. The following individuals have been designated to handle inquiries regarding the application of Title IX and its implementing regulations and/or USU's non-discrimination policies: Executive Director of the Office of Equity, Alison Adams-Perlac, [alison.adams-perlac@usu.edu](mailto:alison.adams-perlac@usu.edu), Title IX Coordinator, Hilary Renshaw, [hilary.renshaw@usu.edu](mailto:hilary.renshaw@usu.edu), Old Main Rm. 161, 435-797-1266. For further information regarding non-discrimination, please visit [equity.usu.edu](http://equity.usu.edu), or contact: U.S. Department of Education, Office of Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights, 800-421-3481, [ocr@ed.gov](mailto:ocr@ed.gov) or U.S. Department of Education, Denver Regional Office, 303-844-5695 [ocr.denver@ed.gov](mailto:ocr.denver@ed.gov). Issued in furtherance of Cooperative Extension work, acts of May 8 and June 30, 1914, in cooperation with the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Kenneth L. White, Vice President for Extension and Agriculture, Utah State University.