



Cook It or Crunch It?

Have you always wondered how to prepare vegetables in order to maximize their nutritional content? There's no easy answer, since cooking powers up the nutrients in some vegetables—and does the exact opposite in others.

The following are some popular produce items and why it's better to cook them or eat them raw.

Asparagus

Eat it: Cooked. Steaming that asparagus ignites its cancer-fighting potential.

Beets

Eat them: Raw. Beets lose more than 25 percent of their folate when cooked. Eating them raw will preserve this brain compound.

Broccoli

Eat it: Raw. Heating deactivates myrosinase, an enzyme in broccoli that helps cleanse the liver of carcinogens. People eating steamed broccoli seem to get only about a third as much of these special cancer-fighting compounds.

Mushrooms

Eat them: Cooked. Heating mushrooms—whether you sauté, boil, grill, or roast them—brings out more muscle-building potassium.

Onions

Eat them: Raw. Just slice and eat: You get less of the hunger-busting phytonutrient allicin when you cook onions.

Red peppers

Eat them: Raw. Their vitamin C breaks down when roasted, fried, or grilled above 375 degrees.

Spinach

Eat it: Cooked. Have it cooked and you'll absorb more calcium, iron, and magnesium.



Tomatoes

Eat them: Cooked. When you eat tomatoes cooked, it helps to break down the plant cell walls, allowing us to better absorb the cancer-fighting antioxidant lycopene.

Although some nutrients are sensitive to heat there are others, like the fat-soluble vitamins (A, D, E and K), which are unaffected. So whether you choose to eat your fruit and vegetables raw or cooked follow these tips to get the most out of them:

- Store fruits like tomatoes at room temperature rather than in the fridge - this optimises the ripening process and increases levels of valuable lycopene.
- Avoid losing water-soluble vitamins like the vitamin B group as well as vitamin C, by choosing cooking methods which use the minimal amount of water or preferably no water at all, like roasting.
- Increase your absorption of fat-soluble vitamins by eating your veggies with a little oil. Enjoy a spinach salad with vinaigrette dressing, roast vine tomatoes with a drizzle of olive oil or quickly stir-fry spring greens.
- Finally, balance your intake. Enjoy crunchy raw vegetables to top up on immune-busting vitamin C, and cook others for their mix of protective antioxidants.