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VARIETY IN VEGETABLES

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The University of Nebraska Agricultural Extension Service and
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W. H. Brokaw, Director, Lincoln

Variety In Vegetables¹

LEONA S. DAVIS

Vegetables are of great importance to good health and well being. For positive or optimum health, which is better than average health, the ordinary diet needs to be enriched with the necessary minerals and vitamins.

The foods which are outstanding in these properties are milk, fruit, vegetables, whole grain cereals, and eggs. Dr. McCollum calls these the "protective foods", and advocates a liberal use of them for the "preservation of the characteristics of youth". The health of the family is the home-maker's responsibility and she needs to give thought to the supplying of the "protective foods".

With the growing emphasis on the needs of the body for minerals and vitamins, vegetables are recognized for the contribution which they make to the diet. They are no longer considered expensive luxuries, but are essential to buoyant health.

Vegetables have various properties which make them desirable. Certain vegetables such as potatoes, dried beans, and dried peas are sources of energy. The legumes are also good sources of protein, although it is not equal in quality to the proteins furnished by milk, eggs, and meat. Vegetables have a mild laxative value. The cellulose forms a bulky residue which acts as a mechanical stimulant, and in addition there are other substances which exert a mild laxative effect. However, as a group, vegetables are most important for their supply of minerals and vitamins.

MINERAL CONTENT OF VEGETABLES

There are several minerals necessary for adequate nutrition; however, the ordinary foods are of such composition that if special provision is made for calcium, phosphorus, and iron, the other minerals which are equally important will be supplied also.

Minerals are of great importance. They are the chief constituents of bones and teeth; they are essential elements in all body cells; they exert influence upon the elasticity and irritability of muscles and nerves; they aid in supplying material for digestive juices; and they are responsible for maintaining the neutrality of body fluids.

Calcium is essential for strong bones and good teeth. It is needed to help give the muscles the ability to contract and also affects the normal action of the heart muscle. Calcium is necessary for the coagulation of the blood. Milk and cheese are the best sources of calcium and should be regularly included in the diet in order to insure an adequate supply.

Phosphorus is essential to all body tissues, as it is found in every cell of both bone and other tissue. Phosphorus is also needed to help maintain the neutrality of the blood. It is necessary for calcium utilization and is a

¹ Approved by Miss Matilda Peters, Associate Professor of Home Economics, University of Nebraska.

factor in preventing rickets. With the exception of the legumes and corn, vegetables, as a class, are not important sources of phosphorus.

Iron is another essential mineral. It is a part of the oxygen-carrying hemoglobin of the blood and is necessary for the vital activities within the cells. The amount of iron contained in the body is small, yet it is of great importance. The body does not store any great reserve of iron so it is necessary that the daily diet include foods which are rich in a supply of iron. If the output of iron is greater than the intake, a form of anemia may result. Vegetables, especially the green leafy ones, are important sources of food iron. For this reason they should be used generously in the diet.

Sources of Minerals

In order to insure normal nutrition, an adequate amount of each of the essential minerals is needed. Furthermore, the growing body requires an additional amount of these substances. It is helpful in meal planning to know which of the vegetables are especially good sources of minerals.

The vegetables in these lists are significant sources of the minerals indicated.

Calcium	Phosphorus	Iron
Leafy vegetables	Dried legumes	Leafy vegetables
Beet greens	Beans	Mustard greens
Turnip greens	Lentils	Spinach
Mustard greens	Peas	Dandelion greens
Kale	Corn	Turnip tops
Chard	Brussels sprouts	Kale
Dandelion greens		Chard
Endive		Lettuce
Spinach		Beet tops
Lettuce		Cabbage
Broccoli		Parsley
Cauliflower		Dried legumes
Kohlrabi		Beans
Carrots		Lentils
Cabbage		Peas
Celery		Green lima beans
String beans		Green beans
Parsnips		Green peas
Turnips		Beets
Rutabagas		White potatoes
Dried legumes		Fresh peas
Beans		Broccoli
Lentils		Asparagus
Peas		Brussels sprouts
		Cauliflower
		Radishes

VITAMINS FOR HEALTH

Vitamins are essential for growth, vigor, and maintenance of good health. There is more and more evidence accumulating to show that to

"Vegetables chase the mental blues"

acquire and maintain a high degree of health an abundant use of protective foods is necessary. Vitamins may be called body regulators as they protect health rather than furnish the body-building substances.

Vitamin A, fat-soluble, is essential for growth in the young and for normal nutrition and a high degree of health at all ages. It is an important factor in one's ability to resist body infections. In selecting foods rich in vitamin A, it is a good plan to begin with cream, butter, whole milk, and eggs, then turn to vegetables, using color as a guide. The yellow and green vegetables, especially the green leafy ones, are better sources of vitamin A than the others. Vitamin A is not easily destroyed by heat and is insoluble in water. There is little danger of loss in canning and ordinary cooking.

Vitamin B, water-soluble, is necessary for stimulation of the appetite and for normal muscle tone in the digestive tract. It helps to prevent irritability and nervous conditions. This vitamin is present in many different types of food: whole grain cereals, fruits, vegetables, milk, glandular organs, and yeast. It is absent from refined cereals and fats. Heat tends to destroy this vitamin more readily than vitamin A. The practice of adding soda in the cooking of certain vegetables is to be discouraged, since soda increases the loss of vitamin B.

Vitamin C is water-soluble and easily destroyed by heat and exposure to the air. This vitamin prevents scurvy, irritability, loss of energy, and a sallow, muddy complexion. It is needed to keep the body, particularly the teeth, in good condition. It has been suggested that some of the so-called rheumatism which affects many people in winter and spring is due partially, at last, to insufficient amounts of vitamin C. This vitamin cannot be stored in the body to any great extent. It is found in fruits and vegetables, many of which can and should be eaten raw, because of the ease with which this vitamin is destroyed by cooking. One should not depend upon cooked foods for vitamin C, but eat some raw vegetables and fruits daily.

Vitamin D, fat-soluble, is one of the most stable of the vitamins. Children need vitamin D for proper tooth and bone development and the expectant and nursing mother needs it for the development and nourishment of the child. Fish liver oils, egg yolks, salmon, and butter are the best natural food sources of vitamin D, which prevents rickets.

Vitamin G is water-soluble and heat resistant. It is essential for growth and good nutrition at all ages. It has been suggested that premature old age may result from a long-continued deficiency in vitamin G. Good sources of this vitamin are fresh lean meat, glandular organs, milk, eggs, green leafy vegetables, and the germ portion of cereals.

The following table indicates vegetable sources of vitamins. The vitamin content is given for raw vegetables unless otherwise indicated.

"Remember that 'Variety is the Spice of Life'"

Vegetable Sources of Vitamins A, B, C, and G

(Sherman, *Chemistry of Food and Nutrition*)

- * indicates that the food contains the vitamin
 ** indicates that the food is a good source
 *** indicates that the food is an excellent source
 - indicates that the food contains none or very little
 ? indicates doubt as to the presence or amount
 † indicates that evidence at the present time is insufficient

Food	Vitamin A	Vitamin B	Vitamin C	Vitamin G
Asparagus	variable	*** ?	†	*** ?
Beans, dry	*	**	†	†
Beans, string	**	**	**	†
Beets	*	*	*	**
Beet leaves	**	**	†	***
Cabbage, raw	*	**	***	**
Cabbage, cooked	*	**	*	**
Carrots, fresh young	***	**	**	**
Cauliflower	*	**	*	**
Celery, bleached stems	- to *	**	†	†
Chard	**	* to **	†	†
Corn, yellow	**	**	-	*
Cucumber	- to *	*	** ?	†
Dandelion greens	**	**	*	**
Eggplant	*	*	†	†
Kale	**	†	†	†
Kohlrabi	*	†	*	†
Lettuce	* to **	**	***	**
Onions, raw	- to *	*	**	*
Parsley	†	**	†	†
Parsnips	- to *	**	†	†
Peas, green	**	**	***	*
Peas, dry	*	**	?	*
Peppers, green	**	**	***	†
Potatoes, sweet	**	**	**	†
Potatoes, white	*	**	**	**
Pumpkin	**	*	*	†
Radish	- to *	**	**	†
Rutabaga	- to *	**	*** ?	†
Sauerkraut	*	*	* to **	†
Spinach, raw	***	**	***	**
Squash, Hubbard	**	†	†	†
Tomato, raw or canned	**	**	***	**
Turnips	- to *	**	**	**

"Are your vegetables proud of the way they are cooked?"

VEGETABLE COOKERY

In some homes vegetables are not as popular as they deserve to be. The reason for this may be that vegetables have not been treated with the respect they merit and are not served attractively. Too frequently, a valuable vegetable is ruined by an improper method of cooking. Cold, lumpy mashed potatoes and a watery, stringy mass of greens are enough to discourage even an enthusiastic champion of vegetables. Since vegetables hold such a worthy place in the diet, it is well worth the homemaker's efforts to develop within her family a genuine fondness for vegetables. Variety and ingenuity in serving them are to be recommended. The ability to serve a vegetable in its best state is a worthy achievement.

Many vegetables are attractive to the eye and appetizing to the taste when served raw. From the standpoint of the conservation of available minerals and vitamins, particularly vitamin C, this is a desirable practice which may be followed even more. Raw, crisp vegetables add variety and interest to the menu as well as interesting color.

The aim in all vegetable cookery is to preserve color and flavor first, then the nutrients. If the vegetables are attractive to look at and taste good, greater amounts will be eaten. There is no one method which will always do these three things; therefore, one must choose whether it is color, flavor, or food value which is to be sacrificed.

There are four general methods of cooking applied to vegetables:

Baking with the skin on is a desirable method if the vegetable contains enough water to prevent it from drying out. This method prevents mineral and vitamin losses. White potatoes, sweet potatoes, tomatoes, and squash may be prepared in this way. Since the mineral layers are next to the skin, this part of the vegetable must be eaten in order to obtain the maximum amount of minerals present.

Steaming ranks next in efficiency in conserving minerals and vitamins. Vegetables which may be steamed without loss of color and flavor are: carrots, corn, white potatoes, sweet potatoes, squash, wax beans, parsnips, green peas, beets, spinach, and any tender greens which cook very quickly.

Steaming under pressure may be used for vegetables which require longer periods of cooking such as dried beans, dried peas, and beets.

Boiling, from a practical standpoint, is the method used most frequently. Boiling is the only desirable method to use for vegetables of the cabbage family, onions, and most green vegetables. Cooking in small quantities of water which will be absorbed by the vegetables at the end of the cooking period is recommended for certain types of vegetables such as carrots and wax beans.

"Boiled cabbage has its points, but the point of any vegetable is its freshness"

The smallest cooking loss occurs in steaming, baking, boiling with skins left on, or boiling in a very small amount of water and utilizing the liquid in which the vegetable is cooked. A practical way to avoid loss of both minerals and vitamins which are soluble in water is to use in some way the liquid in which the vegetable is cooked. This vegetable stock may be served as a vegetable broth, combined with milk for a soup, or used as part or all of the liquid when making sauces, omelets, soufflés, croquettes, and stews.

A short cooking time is to be emphasized in order to preserve nutrients and color when cooking in water. Have the water boiling and keep it boiling as the vegetables are added. Add salt to the boiling water (1 to 1½ tsp. per quart) before the vegetables are added. This improves their flavor. **Cook only until tender and drain immediately.** This is an important point to remember, as prolonged cooking increases the loss of both minerals and vitamins as well as changes the flavor and color.

Cooking losses are due mainly to two factors: the dissolving of the water-soluble nutrients in the cooking water and the chemical changes which are caused or hastened by heat. Vitamin C is destroyed by oxidation and heat. In general, this loss is about 50 per cent; however, the loss of this vitamin is less if the product is cooked quickly. Vitamin B is destroyed in the presence of an alkali such as soda.

Factors which influence cooking losses are:

1. The method of preparing the vegetable for cooking. There is less loss if vegetables are cooked in their skins than if they are pared.
2. The method of cutting the vegetable. Vegetables cut lengthwise do not have as great a cooking loss as those cut crosswise.
3. The proportion of cooking water. The smaller the amount of water used, the smaller the loss.
4. The temperature of the water and the time of returning to boiling temperature. After a vegetable is dropped in, the salted water should return to boiling within two minutes.
5. The length of cooking period. There is from 50 to 100 per cent greater loss if the vegetable is overcooked.

Cooking of Vegetables According to Color

Vegetables may be grouped according to colors: green, red, yellow, and white. There are certain factors to keep in mind when cooking vegetables of each color.

Green vegetables.—The green coloring matter of vegetables is chlorophyll. It is associated in plant life with vitamin A and iron, and is important from a human nutrition standpoint. Chlorophyll is almost insoluble in water. Any change of color is due to heat and acids formed from

*"Have your vegetables cooked enough,
Not too mushy and not too tough"*

the vegetable itself. When green vegetables are cooked in small amounts of water in a covered container, they are likely to discolor.

To avoid loss of color:

1. Use a large proportion of water to the vegetable, the amount used depending upon the vegetable and time required. The addition of table salt helps to preserve the green color during the cooking process. Tender greens which cook very quickly may be cooked in small amounts of water as they cook tender before the heat and acids have time to effect much change in color.

2. Leave the container uncovered during the first few minutes of cooking to permit volatile acid to escape and cook only until tender.

3. Avoid steaming of green vegetables if a green color is desired. However, tender greens which cook quickly may be steamed without loss of color.

Yellow vegetables.—Yellow vegetables have been found to be good sources of vitamin A, which is insoluble in water and quite stable. The yellow color is due to a class of pigments called carotinoids. These vegetables such as carrots, pumpkin, squash, and sweet potatoes, can be cooked in a small amount of water in a steamer or pressure cooker without damage to color.

Red vegetables.—The red coloring of certain vegetables such as red cabbage, beets, and radishes, is due to a group of pigments known as anthocyanins. These are soluble in water and may undergo color changes. If the red vegetables are cooked in hard water, they fade and turn gray. The best condition for the cooking of red vegetables is the presence of a small amount of dilute acid such as vinegar, lemon juice, cream of tartar, or tart apples.

1. Red cabbage fades if acid is not actually added to the cooking water.

2. Beets maintain their red color if they are not pared or cut. They may be boiled, steamed, or cooked in a pressure cooker without loss of color, flavor, or nutrients.

White vegetables.—The white vegetables contain pigments known as flavones. In the presence of hard alkaline water, they may turn slightly yellow. White vegetables are likely to turn dark to grayish in color if they are cooked too long. They should be cooked only until tender.

Cabbage, Brussels sprouts, cauliflower, and turnips are sometimes called strong flavored. The strong odor and taste develop as a result of over-cooking. These vegetables should be cooked in a relatively large quantity of boiling salted water for the shortest possible time. A slightly crisp texture in cabbage, cauliflower, and Brussels sprouts is desirable. If onions are cooked too long, the flavor may pass off with the steam, and the finished product may be flat and insipid.

As far as flavor is concerned, most other vegetables are best when cooked by methods which involve small amounts of water.

"Don't be color-blind when cooking vegetables"

Time Table for Boiling Vegetables ²
(Yield two cups when cooked)

Vegetable	Approximate Measure	Preparation	Approximate amt. of boiling, salted water, 1-1½ t. salt per qt. of water	Time to Cook (Minutes)
Asparagus	2½ small bunches	Woody ends broken off and scales removed	5 c.	Butts, 20-25 Tips, 5-10
Beans, green	¾ qt.	Whole or cut once; strings and ends removed	4 c.	30-35
Beets (young)	5 medium sized	Whole; skins, stems, and root left on	4 c.	40-60
Broccoli	½-¾ bunch	Woody ends broken off; stalks cut into 1-inch pieces	7 c.	Stalks and leaves, 30 Flowerets, 5
Brussels sprouts	¾ qt. box	Partially split or whole	5 c.	9-10
Cabbage compact head	½ medium head (5" in diameter)	Shredded	5 c.	8-9
Cabbage, red	¾ medium head	Shredded; cooked with 2-3 apples or 4-5 T. of vinegar	4½ c.	20-25
Carrots	6 medium sized	Cut in halves or thirds lengthwise	3 c.	Young, 20-25 Old, 30-40
Cauliflower	1 head	Separated into flowerets	6½ c.	8-10
Onions, white	6 medium	Partially quartered	9 c.	25-35
Onions, yellow	6 medium	Partially quartered	9 c.	20-25
Parsnips	3 medium sized	Cut crosswise in two pieces and lengthwise in halves or thirds	3 c.	25-30
Peas, green	2½ c. shelled	Shelled	3 c.	20-30
Potatoes, Irish	3 medium sized	Cut in halves lengthwise	4 c.	25-30
Potatoes, Sweet	3 medium sized	Cut crosswise in two pieces and lengthwise in halves	3 c.	15-25
Rutabagas	½ medium sized	Cut lengthwise in slices one-half inch thick	9 c.	25-30
Spinach, with stems	½ peck	Stems not removed	2½ c.	8-10
Spinach, no stems	¾ peck	Stems removed	5 c.	4-5
Squash (Hubbard)	½ squash 11" in diam.	Pared and cut into pieces 2 x 3 inches	4 c.	20
Turnips	3 medium sized	Pared and cut in ¾-in. cubes	8 c.	20-25

² Time tables taken from *How's and Why's of Cooking*, Halliday and Noble.

"Trifles make perfection, and perfection is no trifle—Michael Angelo

Time Table for Steaming Vegetables ³

Vegetable	Preparation	In Steamer (Minutes)	In Pressure Cooker	
			(Minutes)	(Pounds Pressure)
Beets	Whole	60-90	(Young) 15 (Old) 30	15 15
Carrots	Sliced crosswise	(Young) 25-30 (Old) 40-50	(Old) 10-15	10
	Cut crosswise in two pieces and lengthwise in halves or thirds	35-45		
Parsnips	Quartered	30-35		
Potatoes, Irish	Cut crosswise in two pieces and lengthwise in halves	25-35		
Potatoes, Sweet	Stems removed	8-10		
Spinach (young)				
Squash (Hubbard)	Pared and cut in 2-in. sqs.	20-25		

Time Table for Baking Vegetables ³

Vegetable	Approximate Size of Vegetable	Temperature of Oven and Time of Cooking
Potatoes, Irish	1 1/2-2 inches in diameter	450° F. for 45-60 minutes
Potatoes, Sweet	2 1/2-3 inches in diameter	450° F. for 35-45 minutes
	In pieces 3/4-1 inch thick	450° F. for 20 minutes, then at
Squash, Hubbard	squares	400° F. for 30-40 minutes longer

VARIETY IN VEGETABLE COOKERY

The correct seasoning for a properly cooked vegetable is no trifling matter. The homemaker who believes that her vegetable cookery is as important as her skill in cake making will have little trouble in teaching her family to enjoy the eating of vegetables. Vegetables may be served in the following ways:

Au gratin.—The basis for this is a creamed vegetable to which buttered crumbs are added. White sauce is added to the cooked vegetable, the mixture placed in a baking dish, and covered with buttered bread crumbs. It is then baked in a hot oven for 10 to 12 minutes. Cheese is often added to the white sauce.

Buttered.—The choicest of seasonings should be used, either the best butter or cream for fine flavor. All vegetables are improved if gently shaken over a slow fire after they are drained, to remove excess cooking liquid before the seasoning is added. Potatoes will become dry and mealy.

³ Time tables taken from *How and Why of Cooking*, Halliday and Noble.

"Vegetables are good to eat and good to look at"

Add one to two tablespoons of butter for each two cups of cooked vegetable.

Creamed.—White sauces are frequently used in serving vegetables. For asparagus, green beans, Brussels sprouts, cabbage, celery, carrots, cauliflower, onions, and green peas, use a medium white sauce. The usual proportion for combining is one cup of white sauce to two cups of vegetable. Milk, top milk, or cream may be used in making the sauce.

Croquettes.—Thick white sauce is combined with mashed or finely diced vegetables. This is molded into uniform shapes, dipped in egg, then in crumbs and fried either in deep fat at a temperature of 365° to 400° F. or cooked in a small amount of fat until golden brown. The egg in which the croquettes are rolled may be beaten slightly and mixed with one tablespoon of milk or water. The croquettes are more easily handled if allowed to dry for an hour before being fried. A small wire basket is convenient to use for deep fat frying. Croquettes should be allowed to drain on absorbent paper before serving.

Custards and timbales.—Cooked vegetables may be chopped or diced, added to an egg and milk mixture and baked to form a custard. After seasoning, pour the mixture in a greased baking dish or individual baking cups, set in a pan of hot water and bake slowly until mixture sets. If the ingredients are kept hot before being placed in the oven, the vegetables will not be so likely to settle. Bread crumbs or flour may be used to replace part of the egg.

Timbales are vegetable and egg mixtures in which none or very little milk is used, and the mixture baked in molds. Asparagus, corn, pumpkin, squash, sweet potatoes, and spinach may be used in this way.

Fritters.—A batter of 1 c. milk, 1 c. flour, 1 egg, and ½ tsp. salt may be made and vegetables dipped in this and fried by spoonfuls in deep, hot fat (360°-370° F.). Drain on absorbent paper.

Glazed.—Partially cooked vegetables such as carrots, parsnips, and sweet potatoes, may be cut lengthwise and placed in a baking pan. A sirup of equal parts of brown and white sugar and water boiled for three minutes may be poured over the vegetables. Add 1 T. butter for each cup of sugar and 1 tsp. of salt. The sirup is poured over the vegetable, which is baked in a moderate oven until tender and basted several times. Honey may be substituted for one-half of the sugar if desired.

Mashed.—Potatoes, sweet potatoes, turnips, rutabagas, carrots, and parsnips may be served mashed. The vegetable is boiled in salted water, drained, heated until excess water is removed, then mashed thoroughly. Potatoes especially should be beaten until fluffy and free from lumps. Milk or cream should be heated before being added to the vegetable. Other seasonings, such as butter and pepper, may be added if desired.

"Let cold water run on onions while peeling them; thus your tears may be saved for some other occasion"

Soufflés.—Vegetable soufflés are made from seasoned vegetable pulp thickened to the consistency of thick white sauce. For each one-half cup of pulp use one egg. Separate the eggs and add the yolks to the vegetable, then fold in the beaten whites. This is set in a pan of hot water and baked slowly until set. Tomatoes, spinach, peas, cauliflower, corn, asparagus, and other vegetables may be used in this way.

Scalloped.—To scallop raw vegetables, place a layer of sliced vegetable in a buttered baking dish, sprinkle with flour, salt, pepper, and bits of butter. Repeat until dish is full and pour in milk (preferably hot) until it is visible in the container. Bake in a **slow** oven until the vegetable is tender. Fresh milk and low oven temperatures should be used to prevent curdling. To scallop cooked vegetables, use a white sauce in place of milk and flour. Corn may be scalloped by alternating layers of cracker crumbs, corn, and seasonings, then covering with milk. Tomatoes are scalloped by arranging layers of seasoned tomatoes and toasted bread cubes.

Soups.—For cream soups, combine one cup of mashed or strained vegetable pulp with two cups of thin white sauce.

Vegetable purée is made by forcing the cooked vegetable through a sieve into the vegetable stock. The purée may be thickened, seasoned, and served. For tomato soup, the seasoned tomato juice may be thickened and beaten into hot milk. Soda is not necessary to prevent curdling.

Stuffed.—Green peppers, cucumbers, onions, and eggplant may be partially cooked and the shells filled with well-seasoned cereal or meat mixtures. Tomatoes may be stuffed without precooking. Irish potatoes may be thoroughly baked, opened, the pulp removed, mashed, seasoned, and mixed with meat or vegetable mixtures. Mashed carrots or spinach are good combinations with the potato pulp. A small amount of liquid is added to the pan in which the vegetables are baked.

SUGGESTED COMBINATIONS

For variety's sake as well as for health's sake, the habit of serving vegetables frequently is a good one to develop. In planning combinations of foods, attractiveness should be kept uppermost in mind. Variety in color, flavor, and texture will add interest to the meal.

The following combinations are suggested ways of using vegetables:

Boiled dinner: Beef, turnips, carrots, cabbage, potatoes, and onions.

Fried chicken, mashed potatoes, buttered carrots, and cauliflower.

Meat pie with biscuit crust, raw carrot and rutabaga strips.

Baked lima beans with ham and green pepper, and tomato-lettuce salad.

Tomatoes scalloped with cheese and hard-boiled egg, fried eggplant.

Vegetable milk chowder, beet and egg salad.

Scalloped cauliflower with cheese and hard-cooked egg, stuffed tomato salad.

"A soggy potato is like a limp handshake. It makes no friends"