



Harvest of the Month | Family Newsletter

Broccoli

This dark green vegetable that looks like a tree is a member of the mustard family of plants and is closely related to cauliflower and cabbage. Broccoli is a relatively new crop to the United States. It was first commercially-grown in the U.S. in the early 1920's but did not become a crop of any significance in the U.S. until after World War II.



Did you know?



Broccoli is grown in almost every state in the U.S.



Broccoli is native to the Mediterranean region, cultivated in Italy in ancient Roman times and introduced into England about 1720.



The U.S. is the world's largest producer of broccoli.

Selection

Good quality broccoli has either a dark or bright green to purplish color on the flower end and is tightly budded. Heads should be compact and firm. Avoid broccoli with a flower end that is soft enough to easily part with fingertips.

Storage

Broccoli stored in refrigeration (39 to 41°F) will have a shelf life of approximately 5 days. Unprocessed broccoli should be stored loosely covered and away from ethylene gas producing fruits and vegetables (e.g., apples, bananas, melons, pears, peaches, potatoes, and tomatoes.) Keep broccoli away from moisture during storage as moisture can cause the broccoli to become limp and moldy. Do not store broccoli in dry storage.

Handling

Wash broccoli under cold, running water just prior to use. Do not allow it to soak in water. Use cut florets within 2 days.

Nutrition

Broccoli is a good or excellent source of many nutrients earning it a reputation as among the most nutrient-dense foods. Among the nutrients in broccoli are vitamin C, vitamin K, vitamin A, folate, and potassium. Vitamin C is important in the body's healing process and may play a role in guarding against heart disease and cancer. Vitamin C also helps the body absorb iron. Vitamin K is important in the blood clotting process and therefore helps us avoid bleeding too much from cuts and scrapes. Vitamin A helps maintain good vision and fight infection. Folate is needed to produce healthy red blood cells. Potassium may help to maintain healthy blood pressure. Phytonutrients, which are under scientific investigation for their role in cancer prevention, are also highly concentrated in broccoli. Broccoli is also a good source of fiber which helps to maintain healthy digestion and may play a role in reducing the risk of diseases such as obesity, heart disease, and diabetes.



Harvest Season

According to the PA Preferred Seasonality Calendar, broccoli is in season in Pennsylvania from May through November.

Finding Broccoli

Child Nutrition Program operators may be able to find local broccoli in a variety of ways. Check with your produce distributor to learn what they have available. You can search for products through the PA Preferred website or connect with local producers through produce auctions or farmer's markets. The Food Trust has also developed a Guide to Local Produce in Keystone Schools which identifies producers who are interested in selling to schools.

Preparation

Broccoli can be prepared and served in a variety of ways. After rinsing and trimming it can be eaten plain, with a low-fat dip such as yogurt, in vegetable or pasta salads, as a topping for baked potatoes or pizza, or as an addition to an omelet or scrambled eggs. It can be added to soups, casseroles, and stir-fry dishes. Other ways to prepare broccoli include:



Blanch: Blanch briefly in boiling water, cool in an ice bath, and pat dry.



Roast: Drizzle with olive oil and low-sodium seasonings. Spread on a baking sheet and roast for 15–20 minutes at 400°F.



Microwave: Place chopped broccoli or florets in a microwave-safe dish with 2–3 tablespoons of water. Microwave on high for 5–8 minutes.



Steam: Place chopped broccoli florets and/or stems into steamer. Steam for about 10–15 minutes or until desired tenderness.



Note: Boiling broccoli can cause a loss in nutritional value. Try some of the preparation methods listed above instead, or serve it raw.



Tip: There's no need to waste the broccoli stalks. Peeled and sliced, they have a texture similar to a water chestnut with a mild, sweet flavor. They can be added to soups, casseroles, or stir-fry dishes, or eaten raw. The stalks can also be grated and used instead of (or in addition to) cabbage in coleslaw recipes.



Recipe | Broccoli Strawberry Orzo Salad

Makes: 6 servings

Ingredients	Measure	Directions
Orzo pasta (uncooked)	¾ cup	1. Cook orzo pasta according to directions. Drain and rinse with cold water. 2. In a large bowl, combine orzo pasta, broccoli, strawberries, and sunflower seeds. Drizzle with lemon poppy seed vinaigrette and toss to combine. 3. Season with salt and pepper. Chill in refrigerator until ready to serve. Note: A different fruit could be used in place of the strawberries.
Fresh broccoli (chopped)	2 cups	
Fresh strawberries (diced)	2 cups	
Sunflower seeds	¼ cup	
Lemon Poppy Seed Dressing:		
Lemon juice (fresh or bottled)	1 tablespoon	
Apple cider vinegar	2 tablespoons	
Olive oil	2 tablespoons	
Sugar (or honey)	1 teaspoon	
Poppy seeds	1 teaspoon (optional)	

Source: [South Haven Health System – Community Fit!](#)



Check out the PA Harvest of the Month website (www.paharvestofthemonth.org) for sources, additional resources, and recipes.

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