

## Steamed Vegetables - Easy way to eat more greens!

Eat your vegetables! Your mother does not have to tell you anymore that green and bright colored vegetables are good for you. We are talking about asparagus, broccoli, chard, collard greens, mustard and beet greens, spinach, pea pods, bok choy, cabbages that are available at the market today. They are rich in vitamins A, C, and K; rich in phosphorous, calcium and zinc; packed with antioxidants and phytonutrients to protect the brain, eyes and heart; and, of course, fiber. Agreed. But how to make them taste good and easy to fit into your menus and lifestyle.

You can buy all kinds of commercially prepared vegetable blends but they can be expensive and often contain more sodium, fat and calories than you want. If you find that steamed vegetables are too plain and if butter, salt and pepper does not suit you and before you pour on the cheese sauce, try steaming and some of the seasoning suggestions included below.

**Steamed:** Steaming at home can be done 4 basic ways and takes less than 10 minutes for most vegetables. When you boil water, it creates steam, which is really hot. You use that steam to cook the vegetables which do not touch the boiling water at all. How you steam will depend on what kind of equipment you have available. But whether you use your stove top, your microwave, a steaming bag or an appliance such as a rice cooker or electric steamer, steaming is simple, fast and the best way to preserve those healthy nutrients.

1. Steaming basket or colander on the stove top: You need a pot with a lid large enough to contain your veggies and some kind of a steaming basket to hold them above the water which has holes in the bottom to allow the steam to reach the veggies. A basket can be made of metal or silicone or you may use a metal which fits your pan and can be covered by the lid.
2. Pot on stove top: If you have no basket, it is possible to steam vegetables using only a pot with a lid which is large enough for your vegetables. Add just a bit of water, a half inch should do it, in the bottom of the pan and set to boil. Once boiling, add vegetables and cover loosely, allowing some steam to escape. Important to preserve the bright green color of vegetables. Keep an eye on the water level. Add more water if it gets too low so it keeps generating steam. Some of the nutrients will end up in the water remaining so use that concentrated vegetable broth for soups or sauces by freezing it for use later.
3. Electric steamer or rice cooker: This kitchen appliance is designed to steam food. Some have timers and baskets for different foods at one time. Basically, you fill the base with water which contains a heating element that generates steam which flows through the baskets above.
4. Microwave Method: All you need is a microwave safe bowl and plastic wrap. You can buy specialty microwave steamers or plastic bags that can be used for steaming as well but this is the simplest, least expensive way to get started. The microwave not only heats the water but also heats the vegetables so that are only partially cooked by steam. Place washed and uniformly cut veggies in bowl and add a bit of water. Leafy vegetables do not need extra water, just what is on them after washing. Cover bowl with plastic wrap or lid, leaving a gap for steam to escape. Microwave on high until cooked to taste and texture you like. Start at 5 minutes and add a minute at a time. Remove plastic wrap carefully.

**Common for all methods is that vegetables should be washed and cut in uniform pieces or left whole. Times will vary depending on the density and freshness of the vegetables. A general guideline is included on the reverse of this handout.**

**Now what?** Before you pour on the cheese sauce, try these. Hope you find a new favorite!

Fresh herbs: Try adding whole sprigs of fresh herbs like parsley, thyme or dill over the vegetables to the steaming basket. Chop up leaves and sprinkle over vegetables once cooked.

Garlic or ginger: Add during steaming or sauté' with a dab of oil and toss with vegetables once cooked. Kale and greens love garlic. Ginger works well with root vegetables.

Lemon: Add a few slices of lemon or lemon zest to vegetables like broccoli, green beans and summer squash. You can also add lemon juice to the steaming water.

Olive or sesame oil: Toss vegetables with oil, salt and pepper before placing in steaming basket. Sesame oil is nice with bok choy, broccoli and other Asian vegetables for additional flavor.

Fish sauce, soy sauce: A couple of tablespoons of soy or fish sauce can be added to the steaming water.

Vinegar: Toss sweet vegetables like sweet potatoes or carrots with balsamic, red wine or sweet rice vinegar before steaming. Add a teaspoon of honey to steamed vegetables.

## Steaming Times for Vegetables

General guide for steaming vegetables. Make adjustments to suit your own preferences.

<b>Vegetable</b>	<b>Steaming Times</b>	<b>Seasoning suggestions</b>
Artichoke, medium	25-40 minutes	Extra virgin olive oil and lemon zest
Asparagus, thin spears	3 to 4 minutes	Olive oil with lemon zest or sesame
thick spears	5 to 6 minutes	
Beets	35 to 50 minutes	Season with fresh thyme
Broccoli, florets	4 to 5 minutes	Olive oil, lemon juice, balsamic vinegar
spears	5 to 6 minutes	
Brussels sprouts	7 to 11 minutes	Fresh thyme or grated nutmeg, butter
Cabbage, cut in wedges	6 minutes	
Carrots, cut 1/4-inch thick	6 to 8 minutes	Honey with cinnamon or ginger
Cauliflower, head	12 to 15 minutes	Lemon or lime
florets	4 to 6 minutes	
Corn on the cob	7-10 minutes	
Green beans, whole	4 to 5 minutes	Garlic in any form
Kale	4 to 7 minutes	Drizzle with olive oil and crushed garlic
Onions, whole pearl	8-12 minutes	
Parsnips, 1-1/2-inch pieces	8 to 10 minutes	Fresh herbs, oregano or parsley
Peas, shelled	2 minutes	Fresh herbs, mint or lemon juice
Pods	5-6 minutes	Asian sauces, mint or lemon juice
Potatoes, new	12 minutes	Toss with fresh parsley, rosemary or dill
2-inch pieces	15 minutes	
Spinach, whole leaves	3 to 5 minutes	Butter, salt & pepper, olive oil and garlic
Sweet potatoes, whole	40 to 50 minutes	Honey and lemon juice
1-inch pieces	12 to 15 minutes	
Swiss Chard, mustard greens	3-5 minutes	Olive oil and lemon juice
Winter squash, butternut, peeled, 1-inch pieces	7-10 minutes	Honey, lemon juice and rosemary
Zucchini, 1/4-inch slices	5 to 7 minutes	Olive, lemon/lime juice, fresh herbs, Thyme or rosemary

### Resources:

Look under the COMMUNITY tab on the [www.salemsaturdaymarket.com](http://www.salemsaturdaymarket.com) website for "Market Fresh Recipes" which will provide you with copies of this handout and other resources used in the preparation of this demonstration. You can download to go directly to these links:

[www.thekitchn.com](http://www.thekitchn.com) How to steam vegetables; Eight Ways to Make Steamed Vegetables Taste Amazing, Persephone Farms, recipes available at booth at Salem Saturday Market.