

VEGETABLE OF THE WEEK

BROCCOLI

Broccoli is a cool-weather crop, available only in the early summer or fall. It is a member of the cole family. This family also includes cabbage, cauliflower, Brussels sprouts, Chinese cabbage, collards, kale and kohlrabi. All of the cole vegetables contain bioflavonoids that help reduce the risk of cancer. It is also a good source of vitamin C, vitamin A and folate, along with calcium, iron, and other minerals.

To store: Wrap broccoli loosely in a plastic bag and keep it in the vegetable bin of your refrigerator. It keeps for over a week but is firmest and tastiest if used within a few days.

Handling: Organic broccoli in particular seems to attract small green worms hiding in its depths. Soak head upside down in cold salted water (1 teaspoon salt to 8 cups of water) for 30 minutes to remove any hidden field worms. Any critters will float to the top where you can rescue them or allow them to suffer a salty death. After cutting off the florets, don't discard the stem. Sliced stems are juicy, crunchy, and perfectly edible. If the skin is thick, you can remove it with a knife or peeler before adding the stem to the your dish.

To use: Chop and separate florets, steam lightly for 5-7 minutes. For salads and veggie platters, you may first want to blanch broccoli in boiling water for 2 minutes and then chill it instead of serving completely raw. Serve chopped broccoli as a pizza topping.

To freeze: Blanch 2-4 minutes, rinse under cold water, drain, let dry, and pack into Ziplock containers. Broccoli will not be firm when thawed and is best used in soups and stews.

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