

## 5 Quick Ways to Prepare Vegetables with Maximum Flavor

For optimal nutrition, virtually every American family needs to eat more vegetables. Poor preparation can be a serious obstacle to vegetable enjoyment, since no one likes to eat over-cooked, soggy, mushy produce. Here are some hot tips for maintaining vegetable flavor and texture, so you can increase veggie variety in your family meals.

### **1. Crunch into raw veggie power.**

Crisp fresh vegetables are popular as nutrient-rich snacks and in entrée and side salads. The key to safe and tasty fresh veggies is storage and cleaning. Purchase high quality items without bruises at the grocery store or farmer's market. Keep them wrapped in the fridge crisper drawer and wash them thoroughly under running tap water just before eating.

### **2. Steam veggies quickly on the stovetop.**

However you cook vegetables, the goal is to make them tender but crisp, while retaining a natural bright color. The time necessary to steam veggies (after the water has boiled) varies depending on the type and size of pieces. Steaming can take as little as 5 minutes for small green beans or cauliflower florets to as much as 45 minutes for whole beets or an artichoke.

### **3. Cook veggies rapidly in the microwave.**

According to the experts, today's microwave ovens are marvels of engineering, miracles of convenience, and great at preserving the nutrient content of vegetables and other foods. This is because microwave cooking can be done quickly (3-8 minutes on HIGH per pound of vegetables) and with minimal amounts of water (a few drops to a couple of teaspoons).

### **4. Stir-fry veggies for a few minutes.**

Stir-frying in a wok or non-stick pan is another wonderfully quick and easy way to prepare fresh or frozen veggies. Thin slices, small pieces, and leafy greens, such as spinach and bok choy, take only 1-3 minutes. Carrots, onions, snow peas, and whole green beans may take a bit longer, like 4-6 minutes. Small amounts of olive oil and/or sauce help speed cooking.

### **5. Roast veggies in a hot oven.**

Oven roasting takes longer than other methods of cooking veggies. However, it is easy and convenient when you're already cooking meat or whole poultry in a hot oven (375-400 degrees F). It takes about 45-50 minutes to roast root vegetables (beets, carrots, turnips, parsnips, whole garlic, small potatoes, etc.) that are drizzled with a little oil.