



## VARY YOUR VEGGIES

# How to Prepare Vegetables

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What methods do you use to prepare vegetables?

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Try something new! To take advantage of all their benefits, eat a variety of colors every day and vary your cooking methods to add variety to your menus.

## Cooking Methods

**Microwave:** Microwaving cooks foods faster than most other methods. You use little or no water for vegetables. Microwaving is an excellent way to retain vitamins and color in vegetables. Follow the manufacturer’s directions for best results.

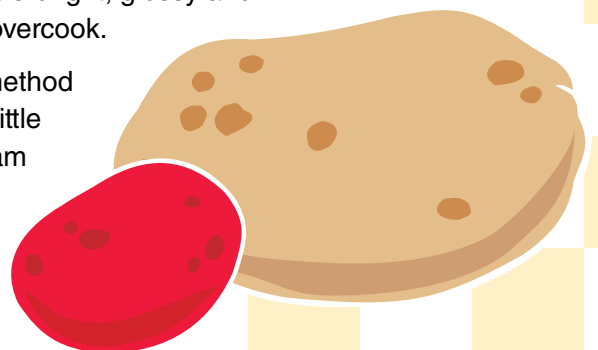
**Steam:** Steaming is a good method for cooking fresh or frozen vegetables. Try this method for vegetables such as asparagus, broccoli, carrots, spinach and summer squash. Use a vegetable steamer or colander to hold vegetables above the water. Place the steamer in a pot with a little boiling water and cover. Cook until the vegetables are just tender-crisp to preserve color and vitamins.

Steaming under pressure (pressure cooking) can be useful for cooking roots (beets, carrots, parsnips, rutabagas, turnips), tubers (white potatoes, sweet potatoes, jicama, Jerusalem artichokes) and dried legumes (peas and beans) that usually require a longer cooking time. Overcooking can occur easily, so following directions is important.

**Stir-fry:** Stir-frying is quick and easy, and preserves the crisp texture and bright color of vegetables. Heat a wok or heavy skillet, add just enough oil to lightly coat the bottom of pan or use a small amount of some other liquid, such as a low-sodium broth. Add small pieces of vegetables and stir constantly while cooking. Cook until the vegetables are bright, glossy and tender-crisp. Do not overcook.

**Pan:** Panning is a method of cooking with very little water or with the steam formed by the vegetable’s own juices.

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The vegetable is shredded or cut into small pieces and placed in a heavy pan with a small amount of cooking oil; that is, just enough to lightly coat the bottom of the pan. A tight-fitting lid is used to hold in the steam. Five to eight minutes is all that is required to cook the vegetables tender-crisp.

Some vegetables suited for pan-frying include shredded cabbage, carrots, sliced summer squash, thinly sliced green beans and most leafy greens.

**Bake:** Baking is done in an oven with dry heat. This is an excellent method to keep vitamins, minerals and flavors in the vegetables. Some vegetables suited to this method include potatoes, sweet potatoes, winter squash and onions. Simply wash thoroughly, prick skins and place vegetables on a baking sheet in the oven.

**Boil:** Cook in a minimum amount of hot liquid, usually water. A general guideline is about 1 cup of liquid for four servings. The liquid left after cooking can be used as a sauce base, in soups or gravies.

Bring liquid to a full boil, add the prepared vegetables, cover and return to boiling. Reduce heat and complete cooking at a gentle boil. Vegetables cook as rapidly at a gentle boil as at a rapid boil because the temperature is 212 degrees Fahrenheit in both cases.

**Additional Methods:** Vegetables can be cooked by broiling, grilling, braising, pan-frying and deep-fat frying.



## Vegetable Stir-fry

(Makes eight servings)

- 1 Tbsp. vegetable oil
- 1 c. thinly sliced fresh carrots
- 1 c. fresh broccoli pieces
- 1 c. thin strips of unpeeled raw potato (optional)
- 1 c. thinly sliced celery
- 3 Tbsp. teriyaki marinade
- 4 c. shredded cabbage\* or lettuce, one small head
- 2 Tbsp. toasted sesame seeds\*\*

In large skillet or wok, heat oil; add carrots, broccoli, potatoes and celery. Cook over medium to medium-high heat, stirring quickly until vegetables are crisp-tender, about six to eight minutes. Stir in marinade. Cover, reduce heat and let steam three minutes. Add lettuce and sesame seeds. Stir one minute longer.

Makes eight servings. Each serving has 64 calories, 3 grams of fat and 287 milligrams sodium.

\*Cabbage takes longer to cook and could be added at the same time as the marinade. **Variations:** Combinations of vegetables can be altered to fit what is available or to individual tastes. For example, use green beans or cauliflower in place of broccoli; green peppers in place of celery.

\*\*To toast seeds, place in a shallow baking pan and place in a 350-degree oven until they start to turn a golden color (about 15 minutes). Stir frequently.

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