

theproducelady.org

OCTOBER 2012 E-NEWS

The cool nights and mild days of fall are perfect conditions for farmers growing late-season vegetables. Fall favorites include broccoli, cauliflower, cabbage, collards and other leafy greens. These green veggies are nutritional powerhouses. Broccoli is of particular interest to Dr. Allan Brown at N.C. State University's Plants for Human Health Institute at the N.C. Research Campus in Kannapolis. Dr. Brown is working to breed a better broccoli – one that contains higher levels of naturally occurring beneficial compounds that protect against cancer and other chronic diseases.

THE PRODUCE BASKET



Broccoli: Beneficial Bites

The list of broccoli's nutritional benefits is impressive: low in calories, rich in vitamins A, C and K, high in iron, potassium, calcium and fiber, loaded with disease-fighting antioxidants and relatively high in protein. Including a 1 1/2 cup serving of broccoli (or one of its cruciferous cousins, such as cabbage or cauliflower) in your diet two to three times a week will help ensure you get the most benefit to your health.

Broccoli is a great side dish alone or mixed with other vegetables. You might also add it to salads, casseroles and soups. While raw is the best way to get the maximum benefit from broccoli's health-promoting compounds, if you prefer it cooked, lightly steamed is the way to go. "Microwaving and severe cooking have a tendency to break down some of the compounds that have the most impact on health, so the less cooking the better," explains Dr. Brown. Simply fill the bottom of a pot with two inches of water. While the water is heating to a boil, wash broccoli and cut the stems from the florets. The stems are more fibrous (but full of nutrients) and require a longer cooking time. In a steam basket, steam the stems for two minutes before adding the florets. Once the florets are added, steam for five more minutes. Remove from heat, season and serve. Overcooked broccoli is dull in color and develops a strong, unpleasant sulfur odor.

Broccoli is in season and widely available at local farmers markets in North Carolina in the spring and the fall.



JOIN THE MAILING LIST!

The Produce Lady newsletter
is distributed monthly!

Sign up at www.theproducelady.org.

WHAT'S IN SEASON?

Apples, Beets, Broccoli, Cabbage,
Cauliflower, Grapes, Kale, Leafy
Greens, Peanuts, Pumpkins,
Sweet Potatoes, Winter Squash

KEEP IT FRESH

Select broccoli that has a firm head and a consistent, green color. Store unwashed broccoli in the refrigerator for only a few days in a loose plastic bag. Even though older broccoli may appear fine, the flavor may not be as fresh. Always wash fresh vegetables just prior to preparing. Store leftover cooked broccoli in a sealed container for up to a week. Blanch and freeze broccoli to preserve it for up to a year.



The Produce Lady interviews
Dr. Allan Brown, broccoli researcher, at
www.theproducelady.org

GETTING KIDS TO EAT BROCCOLI

Broccoli has a bad rap with kids but there are many ways to entice their tiny palates. If you have a finicky eater, give these suggestions a try:

- Add a flavor complement. Think beyond cheese sauce and ranch dressing. Cottage cheese or yogurt or crumbled feta add the right touch.
- Hide it. Add it to foods that your child does like. Broccoli can be a pizza topping or pasta add-in.
- Make it fun. Kids love Sesame Street's Grover. And Grover has a recipe for "Broccoli Trees in Haystacks." Finding the broccoli floret baked in the middle of a cornbread muffin is like finding a prize!
- Don't give up. Parents spend hours helping their children conquer a new skill. Learning to choose and enjoy healthy foods should be given the same consideration. It may take 8 to 10 exposures to a new food before a child "likes" it. Be patient and keep offering it.

CABBAGE COLLECTION IN KANNAPOLIS

In addition to broccoli, Dr. Brown oversees a research project evaluating cabbage. N.C. State was given an extensive collection of cabbage germplasm. A germplasm is a collection of genetic material for a specific organism, in this case, seeds of cabbage varieties from around the world. The varieties have been evaluated in California, Wisconsin, Florida, Texas, North Carolina, Georgia, New Jersey, Brazil and India. Dr. Brown will continue with evaluation and selection to develop varieties that meet the specific needs of growers in North Carolina and the Southeast.

Contributing Writer: Megan Bame



THE PRODUCE LADY TEAM

Co-Directors

Leah Chester-Davis, leah_chester-davis@ncsu.edu
Brenda Sutton (The Produce Lady), brenda_sutton@ncsu.edu

Videographer/Editor

Ken Ellzey

The Produce Lady is an N.C. Cooperative Extension program located at the N.C. Research Campus in Kannapolis. We are part of the N.C. State University Plants for Human Health Institute. Special thanks to the N.C. Tobacco Trust Fund Commission for their funding support. 10/12

GOOD TASTE

BROCCOLI STIR FRY WITH RED PEPPERS AND WATER CHESTNUTS

- 1 bunch broccoli
- 1 large red pepper
- 3 tbsp. canola oil
- 1/2 cup vinaigrette
- 1 large clove garlic, minced
- 1 8-ounce can of water chestnuts, drained
- Salt and pepper to taste

Cut broccoli into uniform bite-sized florets with about 2 to 3 inches of stalk. Core the red pepper and cut into rings, then shorter strips. Heat the oil in a wok or large frying pan until very hot. Add broccoli (it should sizzle) and stir-fry for 5 minutes. Add vinaigrette, garlic, red pepper and water chestnuts and stir-fry for another 3 minutes. Season to taste and serve immediately.

DID YOU KNOW?

- Broccoli is one of the most economically important vegetables in the country with an annual value exceeding \$600 million.
- In 2007, more than 130 North Carolina farming operations harvested nearly 200 acres of broccoli.

