



Cooking your veg right



As a kid, I can remember being served green beans that were sliced in half, then boiled to death until they were grey and soft. Think sludge! Not only does it turn anyone off vegetables, but this method leaches most of the vitamins and nutrients out of the raw starter.

Today I want my veg barely cooked - still with a bit of crunch and dressed with something nice to bring out their flavour – a splash of extra-virgin olive oil or a spoonful of toasted sesame seeds does the trick for me.

6 easy cooking tips

Follow my 6 quick tips below which save you time in the kitchen:

1. **Dice or slice vegetables into roughly the same-sized pieces** so they all cook evenly. Or put the firmer veg in first and then add in a top layer, adding the less-firm veg a few minutes later into the cooking.
2. **Try not to peel vegetables** as the nutrients are generally concentrated near the skin. Think of potatoes, carrots, pumpkin, sweet potato, parsnip, turnip or celeriac.
3. **Cook vegetables in a small quantity of water** for as short a time as possible. Add just enough to barely cover. Cook until just tender but still firm in the centre when pierced with a sharp knife. Or steam or micro-cook.
4. **Once cooked, don't keep your veg sitting in hot water** for long periods as the heat-sensitive vitamins deteriorate. If you have to hold them over, drain them, toss in olive oil cover and keep warm. Or microwave for 15 seconds so they're hot when you're ready to serve.
5. **The content of minerals** (like potassium and magnesium) and fibre is unaffected by the heat. But they can be leached out into the surrounding water if you use too much.
6. **Don't add bicarbonate of soda.** This was an old-fashioned trick to retain a nice green colour – which it does - but it also destroys the vitamin C and thiamin (vitamin B1).

The bottom line

The golden rule for all veg is to cook until just tender but still crisp. With frozen vegetables, remember they're already half cooked, so they only need a final heat. If you microwave, then your vegetables don't even need any water.