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ROASTED VEGETABLES

Local farms and individual gardens are bursting with delicious fresh summer vegetables. They come in a wide array of colors ... red, yellow, orange, and green and even white. Each gives distinctive flavors, tastes and nutrition benefits to keep our bodies healthy. One can never eat too many fresh vegetables, which are naturally low in calories, fat, and sodium and good sources of fiber and antioxidants. I personally love vegetables and wish restaurants would offer more variety.

While produce is at its peak this is the time to try some new flavors, textures and recipes. Vegetables have different taste and textures depending on how they are prepared. A piece of fresh broccoli is crisp with strong flavor. Cooking it in a pot of boiling water gives you mush with a pungent odor.

Another tip is to experiment with different cooking methods to see how it alters the taste. I grew up eating stewed squash, cooked in boiling water. The result was a mushy, tasteless dish that I rejected. Today I love squash, roasted, which has a very different flavor.

Roasted vegetables have been more popular as consumers try new recipes and have access to grilling more easily with gas models. The roasted corn is a real crowd pleaser. I like to prepare it before grilling the meat items. I simply keep it warm in the oven at 200°F and then bring it out when the meal is ready. The shucks hold in heat and everyone can shuck their own so there is less work for the cook.

GRILLED CORN

Place corn, still in husks, in cold water. Let soak for 30 minutes. Remove from water and grill in husks for several minutes. Discard husks and coat with margarine or butter.

ROASTED ASPARAGUS

2 pounds fresh asparagus, washed and trimmed
2 tablespoons olive oil
1/4 teaspoon salt, if desired
1/8 teaspoon pepper
Sprinkling of garlic powder, if desired
2 tablespoons sesame seeds, toasted

Arrange asparagus in a single layer in a foil-lined 15-in. x 10-in. x 1-in. baking pan. Drizzle with oil. Sprinkle with salt and pepper. Bake, uncovered, at 400° for 12-15 minutes or until crisp-tender, turning once. Sprinkle with sesame seeds. Yield: 5-6 servings.

To grill: Place asparagus in large dish and drizzle with oil and sprinkle with seasonings. Grill directly on the rack or in a vegetable grilling rack/pan, or place on a baking cooling rack on grill grates; grill on medium, turning once until all sides have nice stripes. Depending on your grill, this will only be a few minutes.

ROASTED SQUASH

1 pound fresh yellow squash
2 tablespoons sunflower oil
Freshly ground pepper

Wash squash and slice into 1/2 pieces. Place squash into bowl. Measure oil. Using a spatula coat squash with oil. Place into shallow baking pan. Sprinkle with pepper. Add salt if desired. Cook at 450°F for 15 minutes.

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