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CHOOSE CRUCIFEROUS VEGETABLES FOR CANCER PREVENTION

Cruciferous Vegetables are in season at your local markets. Cruciferous vegetables are members of the cabbage family representing a diverse selection of foods. Nutrient dense, with fiber and phytochemicals, they should be a regular part of your diet. Like all raw vegetables, they are low in calories and sodium and fat and cholesterol free.

According to the American Institute for Cancer Research, human studies have associated cruciferous vegetables with a lower risk of developing lung, stomach and colorectal cancers. Other studies have found lower rates of prostate and bladder cancer from consuming diets high in cruciferous vegetables.

The list of cruciferous vegetables is long with 15 items - arugula, bok choy, broccoli, brussels sprouts, cabbage, cauliflower, collards, kale, kohlrabi, mustard greens, radishes, rutabaga, turnip, turnip greens, and watercress. The term cruciferous refers to the four petal flowers that they produce.

One drawback to this group of vegetables is their strong cooking aroma. To minimize aroma cook them just until tender, don't keep leftovers more than one day, and eat them soon after you buy them either raw or cooked. Most can be purchased frozen which eliminates the storage problem.

These 15 vegetables vary greatly in nutrient content so choose a wide variety. Listed in this article in descending order are the very best sources. For **Vitamin C** select kohlrabi, broccoli, kale, and brussels sprouts. For **Vitamin A** eat kale, mustard greens, turnip greens and collards. Turnip greens and kale are also great sources of **calcium**. **Vitamin K** is abundant in kale, collards, brussels sprouts, and turnip greens. The antioxidants **lutein** and **zeaxanthin** help protect against macular degeneration, the main cause of blindness for persons over 55. Kale, turnip greens, mustard greens, and collards are excellent sources.

Many of these vegetables may be unfamiliar so be adventurous and try them in different forms and recipes. For example, rutabaga can be eaten raw with dip. Try our recipes for soup, strata, and red cabbage and make cruciferous vegetables a regular part of your diet.

POTATO KALE SOUP

2 teaspoons soft margarine
1 very large garlic clove, minced
2 medium-sized onions, finely chopped
4 beef bouillon cubes reconstituted with 3 cups water, divided use
4 1/2 cups potatoes (1-1/2 pounds), peeled and cut into 3/4-inch cubes
2 cups whole milk
1/2 teaspoon dried thyme leaves
1/4 teaspoon dry mustard
1/8 teaspoon ground celery seed
6 cups tender kale leaves, mid-ribs removed, coarsely chopped
1/4 teaspoon (scant) black pepper

In a Dutch oven or soup pot, combine margarine, garlic, onion, and 3 tablespoons bouillon. Cook, stirring frequently, over medium heat 6 or 7 minutes until onion is tender. (If liquid begins to evaporate, add a bit more bouillon.) Add potatoes, remaining beef bouillon, milk, thyme, dry mustard, and celery seed. Bring to a boil. Cover, reduce heat, and simmer about 15 minutes or until potatoes are very tender. Remove pot from heat. Using a food processor or blender, puree about half of the milk-potato mixture and return it to the pot. Return pot to heat. Add kale and pepper. Bring soup to a boil and reduce heat. Simmer an additional 12 to 15 minutes, stirring occasionally, until kale is tender. Stir before serving. Serves 5 to 6.

Nutritional Analysis: calories 189; total fat 4.6g; cholesterol 11 mg; protein 6.6g.

BROCCOLI-CAULIFLOWER CHEESE STRATA

2 cups small fresh broccoli florets
1 1/2 cups small fresh cauliflower florets
6 (1-ounce) slices French bread, cut into 1/2 inch cubes
Vegetable cooking spray
3/4 cup (3 ounces) shredded reduced-fat sharp Cheddar cheese, divided
1 cup 1% low-fat milk
2 (8-ounce) cartons frozen egg substitute, thawed OR 8 eggs
1/4 cup thinly sliced green onions
1/4 teaspoon salt
1/8 teaspoon dry mustard
1/8 teaspoon ground red pepper
6 thin slices unpeeled tomato
1 1/2 teaspoons grated Parmesan cheese
Black pepper (optional)

Arrange broccoli and cauliflower in a vegetable steamer, and place over boiling water. Cover and steam 5 minutes or until crisp-tender. Drain and plunge into cold water; drain again.

Arrange bread cubes evenly in the bottom of an 11x7x2-inch baking dish coated with cooking spray. Top with 1/2 cup Cheddar cheese. Arrange broccoli and cauliflower on top of cheese.

Combine milk and next 5 ingredients in a bowl; stir well, and pour over vegetables. Cover with aluminum foil coated with cooking spray; chill 1 hour.

Cut 10 (1-inch) slits in foil. Bake at 350° for 1 hour, 15 minutes or until liquid is absorbed. Uncover and top with remaining 1/4 cup Cheddar cheese. Arrange tomato slices over cheddar cheese and sprinkle with Parmesan cheese and black pepper. Bake uncovered an additional 15 minutes. Serves 6.

RED CABBAGE

2 tablespoons canola oil
4 cups shredded red cabbage
2 cups chopped unpeeled red apple
1/4 cup brown sugar
1/4 cup vinegar
1/4 cup water
1 1/4 teaspoon salt
1/2 teaspoon caraway seed (optional)
Dash of pepper

Heat oil and add ingredients. Cover and simmer for 45 minutes stirring occasionally.

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