MORE WAYS TO EAT MORE VEGETABLES

Last week’s front page of the Food Section featured a great common sense article on how to eat more vegetables as a sane and simple resolution that will help you achieve both common New Year’s resolutions to eat healthier and shed pounds. I concur whole heartily and so will devote my column on time tested ways to get those veggies on the menu.

First, try having a designated day on the weekend for vegetable prep and cooking. Vegetables can safely be kept in the fridge for five days and heated up for weekday dinners. Ask family members to identify two of their favorites and make a big batch, doubling or tripling the recipe. I regularly keep a five pound bag of carrots on hand for just this.

Utilize ready to eat products like salad, spinach, and slaw mix if time is an issue. Many supermarkets sell washed spinach and in just 5 minutes flat you can have one of my family’s very favorite dishes.

If you prefer your salad freshly made then buy a salad spinner. My OXO brand makes salads a snap with the touch of a button. Add your favorite raw veggies like cucumbers, shredded carrots and cabbage, green and red peppers, broccoli, cauliflower, radishes, mushrooms, tomatoes, etc.

Utilize canned vegetables which are just as nutritious as fresh. They do contain salt so if that is an issue look for the ever increasing varieties of NO SALT added varieties. I have found I often prefer the NO SALT ones. You can also remove salt in canned vegetables by 36-41% simply by placing in a colander and rinsing with cold water.

Try new and novel methods of preparing your vegetables. The Aroma brand rice cooker I own also makes perfect steamed vegetables, as good as any restaurant. You can also steam vegetables in the microwave easily by using a microwave-safe vegetable steamer. If you don’t have or don’t want to purchase a steamer, then use a covered glass baking dish with a small amount of water.

Roasting vegetables brings out their flavor and requires nothing more than placing on a baking sheet, adding some oil and seasoning and letting them cook. Almost any vegetable can be roasted….white potatoes, sweet potatoes, squash, onions, parsnips, turnips, beets, corn, even asparagus. Try baking beets, like a potato, and the skins will fall right off saving precious time to peel them.

It’s snowing right now as I put the finishing touches on this article. This is the time to make a yummy pot of vegetable soup and curl up to a warm fire using that leftover ham bone from the holiday celebrations. Stay warm and remember that resolution to eat more veggies!
SIMPLE COOKED SPINACH
1 pound baby spinach, washed & ready to use
1/2 teaspoon Crazy Jane’s mixed up salt (optional)

Place spinach in large glass Pyrex dish. Sprinkle with seasoning if desired. Add 1 teaspoon water. Cover with glass top and cook for 5 minutes in microwave on high setting.

BAKED BEETS
1 pound fresh beets
Salt to taste

Trim ends and wash beets. Sprinkle with salt if desired. Wrap in aluminum foil and bake in the oven at 350°F for 40 to 60 minutes until done. Unwrap beets and place under running cold water to remove skins.

CARROTS WITH DILL
1 pound fresh carrots
1 tablespoon dried dill
1 tablespoon butter or margarine

Wash carrots and slice. Sprinkle with dill. Steam or cook in microwave in a small amount of water. Drain and add butter or margarine.

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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