

Fall is the Perfect Time to Fall in Love with your Veggies

My family, friends, and clients will tell you that for almost a decade I've been preaching a love of vegetables. Veggies, and the amazing array of vitamins, minerals, and phytochemicals they contain, are crucial for creating and maintaining lasting health. Veggies contribute to healthy gut flora, a strong immune system, brain health, longevity, and cancer prevention, among many other benefits. In particular, cruciferous vegetables (including broccoli, kale, cabbage, and cauliflower) contain B vitamins that are critical for methylation, a process by which our cells repair themselves. We all need cell repair!

Learning to embrace vegetables comes down to flavor and creativity. The odds are that you grew up on flavorless, drab vegetables that had been boiled to the point of losing all their flavor (and nutrients!), or soaked in a bath of ranch dressing. But it doesn't have to be that way! Vegetables can have fantastic flavor, especially when they're lightly dressed, sautéed or roasted.



Many veggies are naturally sweet, like sweet potatoes and carrots, or savory, like celery and broccoli. Those that tend to have more of a bite can have their bitterness balanced out by creative pairing with other vegetables or fruits. You'll also notice that nearly all my vegetable dishes have a variety of either herbs or spices (or both), as science is showing more and more that these power-packed flavor carriers also carry great health boosting properties.

Even if you learn about a million reasons why you should eat vegetables, there's only one that really matters: they taste great. Veggies that are steamed, roasted, baked, and infused with herbs, spices, and oils can be delicious and satisfying.

This explosion of flavor is more than a luxury; it's a necessity if you're intent on eating for maximum health. The more we study and observe the diets of people around the world, the more evidence we have that there's no way to stay at your peak, brimming with vitality and energy, unless veggies are a huge component of your diet. So many of the antioxidants and phytochemicals critical to both short-term and long-term health come from vegetables, and it's key that you stay constantly connected to earth through vegetables.

Veggies also help ward off some of the known effects of the ageing process. Take, for example, glutathione, a key antioxidant that controls many metabolic functions. Blood levels of glutathione decline as we get older, potentially making us more vulnerable to cancer and other health issues. Fortunately, glutathione is abundant in vegetables such as asparagus, avocados, broccoli, garlic, and spinach—all of which, you'll find in many of my Smart Life recipes. So go ahead and start trying more diverse veggie recipes and I promise that you and your family will never look at veggies the same way again.



Eat the rainbow!

Have you heard this expression? It means look at your plate like a canvas, and include many colors of vegetables and fruits. The deeper color of veggies means nutrient-density, rich antioxidants, and more phytochemicals. Phytochemicals do everything from protect our bodies from daily wear and tear to combat cancer. Am I succeeding in convincing you that vegetables are a big deal?

Sample and incorporate the different groups:

- The Cruciferous: broccoli, cauliflower, bok choy, arugula, kale, mustard greens, collard greens
- The Cabbages: red and green cabbage, brussels sprouts, napa cabbage
- The Oranges: carrots, winter squashes, sweet potatoes, orange sweet bell peppers
- The Reds: beets, tomatoes, red carrots, red peppers
- The Squashes: zucchini, acorn squash, spaghetti squash,

butternut squash

- Mushrooms: shiitake, oyster, portabella
- The Leafy Greens: Every kind of dark leafy greens known to man, and other light greens like fennel and celery
- The Purples: eggplant, purple cauliflower, purple potatoes
- The Alliums: onion, garlic, chives, shallots

In early Fall, many vegetables are at their peak season. Use this guide to learn more about what's in season>>

Two new awesome Fall veggie recipes from my Smart Life kitchen are linked here:

- Mediterranean Zucchini
- Acorn Squash with Quinoa and Black Lentils

And here is also my Fall gift to you: The Smart Life Guide to Roasted Veggies.

Smart Life Guide to Roasted Vegetables

6 Steps to Roasting Success:

1. **Preheat Well:** Give your oven 20 minutes or more to reach 450 degrees F.
2. **Cook Like with Like:** Use vegetables with similar cooking times on the same baking sheet.
3. **Use Just Enough Oil:** Too much oil may cause burning. I like to mix my oil with vegetable broth.
4. **Give Veggies Plenty of Room:** Arrange veggies in a single layer with space between them. Space is key to keeping the hot air circulating around and browning vegetables not just heating them and letting them steam in their juices.
5. **Add Seasoning Last:** Minced garlic, fresh herbs, dried spices and sweeteners can burn at high heat. Stir them into vegetables just before serving – the heat of the vegetables is enough to release their flavors and

aromas.

5-10 Minutes	10-15 Minutes	15-20 Minutes	20-25 Minutes	25-30 Minutes
Asparagus spears, trimmed	Brussels Sprouts, halved	Broccoli florets	Carrot chunks	Potato chunks
	Whole Okra pods	Whole cherry tomatoes	Cauliflower florets	Rutabaga cubes
		Whole green beans	Eggplant cubes	Turnip cubes
		Mushrooms (button, shiitake, Portobello)	Fennel chunks	Winter Squash, halved
		Summer Squash slices or chunks	Mushrooms (wild, oyster, trumpet)	Celery root cubes
		Winter Squash chunks	Parsnip chunks	
		Zucchini chunks	Sweet Potato cubes	

Mediterranean Medley

1. Toss 2 cups zucchini chunks, 1 cup eggplant chunks, 2 cups cherry tomatoes, and 1 cup sliced sweet onions with 2 Tbs. olive oil and 1 Tbs vegetable broth.
2. Spread vegetables on 2 baking sheets and roast 15 to 20 minutes.
3. Transfer to serving dish and toss with 1Tbs. herbs de Provence and 1 tsp. minced garlic. Season with sea salt and pepper to taste.