

Broccoli – a Humble Superfood

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It might not look or sound as sexy as goji or açai berries, but in terms of health giving properties, broccoli is in the same league.

Broccoli is a member of the brassica (cabbage) family which has been shown to lower the risk of a number of cancers if eaten regularly. Broccoli contains diindolylmethane (or DIM for short) and sulforaphane which have anti-cancer properties. DIM is also thought to have anti-viral and anti-bacterial activity, just what you want from a winter vegetable.



Broccoli is a good source of the anti-oxidants vitamin C and carotenes, which help protect us from many degenerative diseases, including cancer and heart disease, may slow the ageing process and support the immune system.

Calorie for calorie, broccoli contains similar amounts of calcium as many cheeses. But very importantly, it also provides significant levels of magnesium which is just as essential for healthy bones as calcium.

Broccoli is a good source of folic acid. A small serving (80g) contains more than a fifth of the 400 mcg of folic acid recommended to pregnant women. It is also a reasonably good plant source of iron.



To get the most out of your broccoli, it is best steamed. Boiling broccoli (or in fact, most vegetables) leads to a significant loss of many valuable nutrients.

Broccoli of course makes an easy accompaniment to fish, meat and many vegetarian dishes. To spice it up try one of the following recipes.

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Warm broccoli and red pepper salad

This is a great immune boosting salad. Broccoli and red peppers are excellent sources of vitamin C and pine nuts provide zinc, two crucial nutrients for the immune system. The garlic not only adds to the taste but is said to have anti-viral, anti-bacterial and anti-fungal properties.

Serves 4

1 medium head of broccoli, broken into small florets
2 large red peppers, deseeded and quartered
Olive oil for roasting
2 large cloves of garlic, unpeeled
3 tbsp olive oil
1 tbsp balsamic vinegar
Salt and pepper to taste
3 tbsp pine kernels

Coat baking tray and peppers with olive oil and roast together with the whole garlic cloves at 200°C for 20-25 minute, until the skin of the peppers begins to show bubbles. Set aside to cool. Once cool remove the skin of the peppers and cut them into strips. Meanwhile steam the broccoli florets for 4-5 minutes, they should still have some bite.

Roast the pine kernels in a dry pan for about 3 minutes until they start to turn golden, take care not to burn them.

For the dressing remove the skin of the roasted garlic and mash the inside. Mix with the oil, vinegar and spices.

Carefully mix the dressing with the broccoli and red pepper, and sprinkle with the pine kernels.

Stir-fried Broccoli

Another immune-boosting side dish. The ginger is known for its anti-inflammatory properties. This side dish goes very well with fresh tuna steaks, as well as with many other meat or fish dishes.

Serves 4

1 large head of broccoli, broken into small florets
2 tbsp coconut oil
1 clove of garlic, thinly sliced
2 cm piece of fresh root ginger, finely shredded
1 tsp of sesame oil

Blanch the broccoli for 30 seconds in boiling water.

Heat the oil in a wok or large frying pan and stir-fry the garlic and ginger for a few seconds. Add the blanched broccoli and stir-fry for 2-3 minutes.

Sprinkle with the sesame oil and serve.