

A LOOK INTO THE BENEFITS OF RAW FOOD

As I'm writing this article I'm munching on raw rutabaga sticks from the last Good Food Box and feeling pretty smitten with my decision to have a raw snack. I mean, just the act of eating raw carrots, or celery, makes me feel so much healthier. But is a 100% raw diet our key to health?

Raw food, being the diet of almost every kind of animal for all time, dates to prehistoric eras, before humans began cooking with fire. Some believe that prehistoric humans were largely vegetarians, and thus that the human digestive system is configured for raw vegetarianism. Others believe our primitive ancestors were chiefly hunters who ate raw meat. There is evidence for both; modern hunter-gatherer activities range from a low intake of animal product, such as some tribes of Australian Aborigines, to an almost exclusively meat and fish diet, such as the traditional Inuit diet prior to the arrival of the Europeans.

A raw food diet consists fully of foods which have not been heated above a certain temperature. The maximum temperature varies among the different forms of the diet, from 92°F to 118°F (33°C to 48°C). Raw food diets may include a selection of raw fruits, vegetables, nuts, seeds, eggs, fish, meat and unpasteurized dairy products (such as raw milk, cheese and yogurt).

The benefits of the diet are said to include: a stable body mass index; clear skin; more energy; and minimizing a range of common illnesses, from the flu to obesity-related illnesses. Those who follow this way of eating generally believe that:

- Raw food contains enzymes that have been shown to have a synergistic effect with our digestive enzymes, which makes digestion easier. Enzymes are proteins that carry out reactions throughout our bodies and without which we could not live. Digestive enzymes help to break down food into usable chemicals for our body.
- Eating food without enzymes makes digestion more difficult; deprives the body of enzymes; and leads to toxicity in the body, to excess consumption of food, and therefore to obesity and to chronic disease. Although our bodies can produce their own enzymes, many raw food dieters and nutritionists claim that eating cooked or processed food devoid of enzymes puts more strain on the pancreas, resulting in com-

promised health. The enzymes in raw foods are destroyed when heated to over 118 F.

- Raw foods have higher nutrient values than foods which have been cooked. This is due to vitamins denaturing when heated. Although raw food has more vitamins, cooked food like boiled broccoli still retains more than 75% of its vitamins.
- Raw foods contain bacteria and other micro-organisms that stimulate the immune system and enhance digestion by populating the digestive tract with beneficial flora.

Several studies published since 1990 indicate that cooking muscle meat creates heterocyclic amines (HCA's), which are thought to increase cancer risk in humans. German research in 2003 showed significant benefits in reducing breast cancer risk when large amounts of raw vegetable matter are included in the diet.

The counter argument is that cooking helps to make many vegetables more digestible and nutritious and that too harsh and restrictive. Critics of the raw vegan diet argue that it requires special care to include the recommended amounts of several important vitamins and nutrients, including vitamin B-12 and protein. The structure of some foods even makes it difficult to utilize their nutrients without cooking. This includes the lycopene in tomatoes, beta carotene in carrots, and much of the caloric content of starchy foods such as corn, potatoes, manioc, palm, and casava. By cooking starch, which is in all root vegetables, grains and beans, it makes it more digestible by 2-12 times. For this reason many raw food dieters take certain starch rich foods like potatoes out of their diets. Also some vegetables, like kidney beans, and buckwheat are toxic raw.

In conclusion, eating certain easy to digest raw vegetables like celery, lettuce, tomatoes, peppers, cucumber, avocado and fruits can improve overall health by providing vitamins, mineral, fiber and digestive enzymes. Rawschool.com suggests that many other vegetables like roots vegetables, cabbage, broccoli, beans and squash should be cooked to make them more palatable and digestible. And if you are thinking of switching to an all raw diet, do your research!

by Mark-Jan Daalderop

designed & produced by
GreenFuse Images.com



Food Share

Field to Table Centre

90 Croatia St. Toronto, ON M6H 1K9 t: 416. 363. 6441 xt 221 f: 416. 363 0474 e: info@foodshare.net
www.foodshare.net



RECIPES

Broccoli Soup with Yogurt

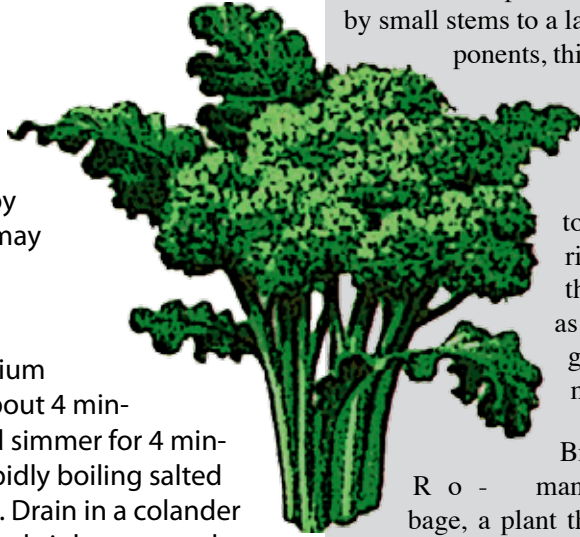
- 2 tsp butter
- 1/2 Cup red onion chopped
- 2 Cups milk
- 4 Cups broccoli florets
- 1/2 Cup plain whole yogurt or soy yogurt (low-fat yogurt may be too sour).
- Salt and pepper to taste

Heat butter in a large pot over medium heat. Sauté onion until softened, about 4 minutes. Stir in milk, bring to a boil, and simmer for 4 minutes. Cook the broccoli florets in rapidly boiling salted water until tender, about 5 minutes. Drain in a colander and rinse under cold water to set the bright green color. Drain. Puree the milk mixture with broccoli in a blender. Return the soup to the saucepan and heat thoroughly. Season with salt and pepper. Serve lukewarm to warm. Garnish each serving with a dollop of yogurt. *Serves 6*

Pasta Salad with Broccoli and Peanuts

- 1/2lb (225 gr) whole-wheat fusilli
- 2 pounds (1 KG) broccoli
- 3 TBS vegetable oil
- 1/2 tsp red-pepper flakes
- 1/4 Cup rice vinegar
- 2 TBS smooth peanut butter
- 3 TBS soy sauce
- 1 cup scallions/chives/green onions, thinly sliced crosswise
- 1/2 Cup roasted peanuts, coarsely chopped
- Salt and pepper to taste

In a large pot of boiling salted water, cook pasta until al dente according to package instructions. Drain, and rinse under cold water; set aside. Meanwhile, trim 1 inch from the stem end of broccoli stalks. Using a vegetable peeler or paring knife, peel outer layer of stalks; thinly slice crosswise. Separate florets into bite-size pieces. Heat 1 tablespoon oil in a large skillet over medium. Add pepper flakes, broccoli, and 3/4 cup water; cover and cook until broccoli is crisp-tender, 6 to 8 minutes. Uncover and cook until liquid has evaporated and broccoli is tender, 2 to 4 minutes. In a large bowl, whisk together remaining 2 tablespoons oil, vinegar, peanut butter, and soy sauce until smooth. Add cooled pasta, broccoli, scallions, and peanuts; toss to combine. Serve immediately, or refrigerate and serve chilled. *Serves 4*



featured this week: BROCCOLI

Broccoli's name comes from the Latin word *brachium*, which means branch or arm, a reflection of its tree-like shape that features a compact head of florets (little flower buds) attached by small stems to a larger stalk. Because of its different components, this vegetable provides a complex of tastes and textures, ranging from soft and flowery (the florets) to fibrous and crunchy (the stem and stalk). Its color can range from deep sage to dark green to purplish-green, depending upon the variety. Broccoli is an excellent source of the vitamins K, C, B6, E and A, as well as folate and fiber. Broccoli is also a very good source of phosphorus, potassium, magnesium.

Broccoli has its roots in Italy. In ancient Roman times, it was developed from wild cabbage, a plant that more resembles collards than broccoli. It spread through out the Near East where it was appreciated for its edible flower heads and was subsequently brought back to Italy where it was further cultivated. Broccoli was introduced to the North America in colonial times, popularized by Italian immigrants who brought this prized vegetable with them to the New World.

Choose broccoli with floret clusters that are compact and not bruised. They should be uniformly colored, either dark green, sage or purple-green, depending upon variety, and with no yellowing. In addition, the florets should not show any signs of opening into the yellow flowers they would eventually become if they were to stay on the plant. The stalk and stems should be firm with no slimy spots appearing either there or on the florets.

Broccoli is very perishable and should be stored in open plastic bag in the refrigerator crisper where it will keep for a week. Since water on the surface will encourage its degradation, do not wash the broccoli before refrigerating. Broccoli that has been blanched and then frozen can stay up to a year. Leftover cooked broccoli can be placed in tightly covered container and stored in the refrigerator where it will keep for a few days.

DELIVERIES

for the week of: April 10th
orders are due 5 pm Tues. April 3rd

for the week of April 17th
orders are due 5pm Tues. April 10th

e. gfb@foodshare.net - tel 416 392-1629 - fax. 416 392-6650
(at our temporary location)

