



Camarillo Certified Farmers Market

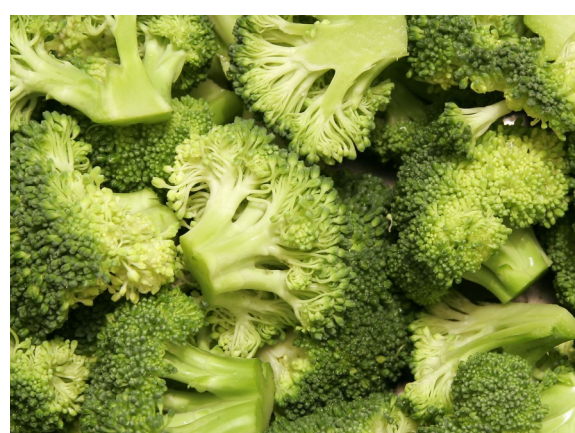
Supporting grief and bereavement services at Camarillo Hospice:
A program of Livingston Memorial Visiting Nurse Association



Source: www.gracelinks.org

If there ever was a vegetable equivalent of cod liver oil, broccoli would be it. On the one hand, it's a virtuous superfood, packed with disease-fighting antioxidants, a mother's dream, keeping the doctor away. On the other hand, it's the culinary equivalent of icky, especially when boiled to death, which has been the default preparation method for at least 30 years. Ahem, please pass the sulfur.

Given its nutritional prowess, broccoli deserves better than a pity party, or the cold shoulder. After all, if its cousin kale can get a sexy makeover, why not the tiny trees of the produce aisle? Let the reinvention begin.



Brief History

The story of broccoli is tied up with cabbage, its botanical grandmother, as well as its many brassica relatives, particularly cauliflower. Like cabbage, as my Megan Saynisch writes, broccoli is native to the eastern Mediterranean. Many historians agree that broccoli's point of origin extends from Asia Minor to Cyprus and Crete. But how it morphed from leafy cabbage into sprouted and fully flowered stalks is up for grabs. Some historians believe that ancient Romans, when writing about the sprouting cymae, may have been referring to broccoli.

In his cookbook, *De Re Coquinaria*, first century Roman gastronome Apicius includes recipes and seasoning variations for "cymas et cauliculos."

As per this translation, Apicius recommended this preparation: Boil the sprouts, season with cumin, salt, wine and oil; if you like add pepper, lovage, mint, rue, coriander; the tender leaves of the stalks stew in broth; wine and oil be the seasoning.

In his encyclopedic work, *Historia Naturalis*, Roman naturalist Pliny the Elder devotes an entire chapter to "Cabbages; The Several Varieties of Them" that includes the curiously sprouting cymae: "These sprouts, in fact, are small shoots thrown out from the main stem, of a more delicate and tender quality than the cabbage itself."

Pliny notes that Apicius, who had an "exquisite palate" scorned the cymae but implies that was not the case for Drusus, emperor Tiberius's son, who allegedly loved broccoli to such an excess he ate it exclusively for one month.

Historians generally agree that broccoli stayed put in Italy for a good long time. It is said that France didn't have its first taste until the mid 16th century, thanks to the doings of one Catherine d'Medici, who moved there from Italy to marry Henry II.

England wouldn't dig its teeth into broccoli until the mid- to late 18th century, around the same time it hit colonial American shores. In the 1768 edition of *The Gardeners Dictionary*, Scottish botanist Philip Miller, who tended the Chelsea gardens in London, shared his preference for purple-headed Roman broccoli, which "(if well-managed) will have large heads, which appear in the center of the plants like clusters of buds." He recommended peeling the stems "before they are boiled: these will be very tender and little inferior to Asparagus." (sic)

On the other side of the Atlantic, botanist John Randolph expressed similarly reserved curiosity about broccoli. While serving as attorney general for the colony of Virginia, Randolph had an extensive garden said to have rivaled that of the Governor's Palace, where a few different kinds of broccoli were grown. In his book, *A Treatise on Gardening by a Citizen of Virginia*, Randolph described his impressions of broccoli: "The stems will eat like asparagus and the heads like cauliflower."

Nearby at Monticello, Thomas Jefferson imported broccoli seeds from Italy for his kitchen garden, as early as 1767, and grew it well into the early 1800s.

American interest in broccoli would remain flat until the 1920s, when a pair of Sicilian immigrant brothers cultivated the first commercial broccoli crops in California. By 1926, brothers Andrea and Stefano D'Arrigo shipped their first railroad car of broccoli to Boston, launching the advent of cross-country produce distribution and the Andy Boy brand of fresh vegetables. Their company, D'Arrigo Bros. Co., is one of the largest produce growers in the country.

Factual Nibbles

In her book on writing, *Bird by Bird*, author Anne Lamott devotes a chapter to broccoli, using it as a metaphor for listening to your intuition. "You need your broccoli in order to write well," she argues.

President George H.W. Bush (George Senior) will likely be remembered as this country's most vociferous critic of broccoli. In 1990, the president banned broccoli from Air Force One and made this emotional display: "And I haven't liked it since I was a little kid and my mother made me eat it. And I'm President of the United States, and I'm not going to eat any more broccoli!"

In response, California broccoli farmers sent a reported 10 tons of broccoli to the White House, where broccoli-loving first lady Barbara Bush met the press and announced that most of it would be donated to local food banks. According to the political news site Smart Politics, the president mentioned the dreaded vegetable 70 times during his four-year term.

So is broccoli a partisan vegetable or one that takes time to warm up to? When asked to state his favorite vegetable at the second annual Kids State Dinner this summer, President Obama said — you guessed it — broccoli.

Parmesan-Roasted Broccoli

Source: Ina Garten (*Barefoot Contessa Back to Basics*), foodnetwork.com

Prep time: 10 min | Cook time: 25 min | Yield: 6 servings

Ingredients

- 4 to 5 pounds broccoli
- 4 garlic cloves, peeled and thinly sliced
- Good olive oil
- 1 1/2 teaspoons kosher salt
- 1/2 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper
- 2 teaspoons grated lemon zest
- 2 tablespoons freshly squeezed lemon juice
- 3 tablespoons pine nuts, toasted
- 1/3 cup freshly grated Parmesan cheese
- 2 tablespoons julienned fresh basil leaves (about 12 leaves)

Directions

Preheat the oven to 425 degrees F.

Cut the broccoli florets from the thick stalks, leaving an inch or two of stalk attached to the florets, discarding the rest of the stalks. Cut the larger pieces through the base of the head with a small knife, pulling the florets apart. You should have about 8 cups of florets. Place the broccoli florets on a sheet pan large enough to hold them in a single layer. Toss the garlic on the broccoli and drizzle with 5 tablespoons olive oil. Sprinkle with the salt and pepper. Roast for 20 to 25 minutes, until crisp-tender and the tips of some of the florets are browned.

Remove the broccoli from the oven and immediately toss with 1 1/2 tablespoons olive oil, the lemon zest, lemon juice, pine nuts, Parmesan, and basil. Serve hot .