

WHICH VEGETABLES And WHICH VITAMINS?

(By S. B. Whitehead, D.Sc.)

We are all vitamin-conscious these days, but few of us know what is fact and what fiction in this field of mystery. Here is a summary from "The Countryman" that we may all accept as authoritative.

NOW that we are all eating more home-grown vegetables, it should be known that, in nutritive values—proteins, carbohydrates, etc.—fresh vegetables and fruits are approximately equal. In health-protective factors—vitamins, minerals, roughage—vegetables often exceed fruits in value. Compared with oranges, carrots contain ten times as much vitamin A, two and a-half times as much vitamin B¹ and two-thirds as much vitamin C; and they cost less.

Vegetables are rich in vitamins A, B¹, B² and C. Vitamin A keeps the mucus membranes and the skin up the mark; and if we do not get enough of it, our vision fails in dim light, our weight decreases and we have digestive trouble. Insufficient vitamin B¹ or B² means nervous disorder. Without B¹ appetite grows poor and there is impaired elimination. B¹ strengthens digestion as well as nerves. Salad vegetables are particularly rich in vitamin C, the food element that looks after blood vessels, gums, and teeth. If we get less vitamin C than we need, our disease-resistance is undermined, and the milk symptoms associated with scurvy, bleeding gums, slow healing of cuts and wounds, and roughened skin, are our lot. A fifth vitamin, known as fertility vitamin E, is also found in the leafy structures of vegetables. It plays an important part in the renewing of the glandular hormones which have much to do with the regeneration of our youth.

Four Groups

A convenient approach to the question of vegetables and their preparation for the table can be made by dividing them into four groups—leafy, bleached, root, and herb. By leafy vegetables I mean all edible parts grown in the sun—turnip tops as well as sprouts, lettuces, cabbages, kale, etc. Generally these vegetables are the kind richest in vitamins, especially vitamins A, B¹, C and E; and as their outer leaves are two to five times richer in vitamins than their hearts, these leaves should be used when possible. Leafy greens are most beneficial to nerve vitality and generative health.

Bleached vegetables like celery, leek, onion, chicory, endive, broccoli, cauliflower, etc., are much less rich in vitamin A, but are good sources of vitamins B¹ and C. They are rich in minerals, and especially valuable for the glandular system. Celery is an old specific for kidney trouble.

Root vegetables and tubers, although deprived of the refining influence of sunlight, are excellent sources of carotene, the provitamin A, and of vitamin C, though they don't have much vitamin B¹. Parsnips, potatoes, root artichokes, and beetroot are also the richest vegetable sources of energy though their carbohydrate or energy-producing content does not exceed nineteen per cent.

The fourth class of vegetables, the herbs, are surprisingly rich vitamin

foods. Parsley, for instance, contains as great a concentration of vitamin A as some grades of cod liver oil, and three times as much vitamin C as oranges.

A Well-Balanced Salad

To plan a well-balanced salad as the main course of a meal, we need one vegetable of each of the four groups. For the leafy green we may choose from lettuce, watercress, mustard and cress, young spring onions, the shredded heart of cabbage, or finely shredded brussels sprouts. For the bleached vegetable there are celery, thinly sliced or grated onion, chicory, cauliflower, etc. Most of the root vegetables, parsnips, turnips, swedes, and carrots, are delicious when freshly grated. Garnishing with a few sprigs of herb, parsley, mint, chives, dandelion leaves, sorrel, or fennel gives a finishing touch. Tomatoes, freshly gathered peas and beans, and young tender runner or kidney beans lend further variety to the summer salad.

What's Lost in Cooking?

Vegetables inevitably suffer losses in nutritive and health-protective values when cooked. It takes more than 4lb. of cooked cabbage to yield the same

energy as 1lb. raw. Then almost all the minerals are soluble in water and apt to be lost; vitamin C is unstable to heat; vitamin A is impoverished by prolonged cooking; and all the B vitamins are water-soluble.

To conserve their food values, leafy greens should be washed, cut into small sections, and allowed to stand in salted cold water for fifteen minutes. This will freshen them and dislodge insects. Then put a tablespoonful or two of vegetable fat in a saucepan with a tightly fitting lid, and bring to cooking temperature. Drain the vegetable, and with no more water than adheres to the leaves, put it into the pan and replace the lid. Reduce the heat to a minimum. The drops of water meeting the hot fat will turn to steam, and the vegetable will be cooked in its own juices without appreciable loss of vitamin food elements. The same method may be followed for bleached vegetables. By simmering a little sliced onion in the fat, then adding vegetables cut into small pieces, two or three vegetables may be cooked together *en casserole*. Potatoes, carrots, and roots are best cooked by baking. As the vitamins and minerals lie chiefly near to the surface, the under-the-ground vegetables should be scrubbed and not pared before cooking.

Vegetable Juices

Many vegetable juices offer a richer concentration of vitamins than fruit juices, and when freshly prepared are preferable to canned-fruit juices. Carrot, turnip, parsnip, and beetroot juices may be extracted by grating the vegetables finely and pressing through muslin or a fruit press. Carrot juice is sweet and wholesome. Beet juice is rather heavy and is best mixed with one of the other juices. Celery juice may be extracted

easily in the same way. Onion juice, although not so palatable by itself, is useful to give flavour to a vegetable cocktail. Cucumbers and melons lend themselves readily to juice extraction. Tomatoes should be heated in a saucepan with a tablespoonful of hot water until the skins burst. Their juice can be readily extracted by pressing.



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