

Vegetable Nutrition

If there is a time to fall in love with vegetables in Manitoba, it is in summer. Have you ever compared a store-bought tomato to a garden-fresh tomato? They are totally different! There are so many vegetables to try, and there are hundreds of ways to prepare and enjoy them. Make it a goal to try some new vegetables this summer, and find a new favourite recipe!

If you are lucky enough to have grown up with a garden, you may already have a deep appreciation for garden fresh food. The connection that comes from the process of getting food its natural state and eating it fresh or cooking it and turning it into some delicious thing can be beneficial for the body and the mind.

We are always told to eat more vegetables and it is for good reason. Many of the daily nutrients we need are covered by eating the recommended amount of vegetables. As a reminder, half your plate should be vegetables at a usual meal, or at least 5 servings in day. Half your plate as vegetables provides a fibrous belly filling effect that leads to less cravings for sugary snacks between meals. For those who make this their regular habit it is common to feel more energetic, eat less processed food and in some cases individuals see weight loss, and improvements of blood sugars or cholesterol levels.

The mind also benefits from activities such as gardening, reading recipes, planning a meal and the actual act of cooking. Studies have shown the act of gardening to help have calming effects on the mind. Many people admit to feeling a sense of satisfaction after cooking, as if the action were a sort of therapy for them. Even people who generally do not cook much report feeling more connection to their food and a deeper appreciation for food, when they are involved in cooking.

Maybe this is the first year you are thinking about trying to grow a few vegetables yourself. Even if you have a very small spot in your yard you could

try growing tomatoes or cucumbers or peppers. Look here for some information on growing tips, soil and water needs, and gardening zones in our province:

<http://www.gov.mb.ca/imr/ir/pdf/pubs/mafri-gnmn.pdf>

Even if you don't have a garden, there are ways to get delicious vegetables that have been grown near you. There are farmer's markets, as well as programs that give you a great price on a box of local vegetables. This is called a vegetable share, or a Community Supported Agriculture or CSA program. Some do offer a delivery service depending where you live, or they have a set location and day of the week that you can go pick up your box for the week. Your box every week that contains a mixture of what is currently growing that month and ready for eating.



If this interests you, check out: <http://csamanitoba.org>

A local Interlake CSA box program is <https://jonathansfarm.com> and this website has information about where to pick up and how to order your own CSA box this year.

Manitoba is home to quite a few different farmer's markets, some starting up as early as May or June, and running every weekend all summer. Visit

<http://fmam.ca> for a complete list of the many markets around the province.

Interlake Eastern region is home to quite a few farmer's markets, and the above website has the list of the different markets and the dates and times for each one can be found by finding them in the list and going to their webpages.

Buying from local farmers in your area boosts the economy and helps small businesses. It also provides you often cheaper and certainly better quality fruits and vegetables.

So, what do you do with these things when you get them home? Number one, keep in mind that it can take a few exposures (even up to 8 or 10 exposures) to

really decide if you like something. Do not be discouraged if the first time your kids try a new vegetable they don't like it or won't try it. There are so many websites and cookbooks that offer ways to cook your vegetables. One simple method is to steam them, and this allows the vegetable to hold on to its nutritional properties. Asparagus for example is commonly enjoyed this way, sometimes with the addition of a small amount of butter or olive oil and a sprinkle of salt. Another way to get more vegetables in your meal is to chop up greens and add them to your stew, chili, pasta, soup or pizza or burgers. Whatever meal you are already making could easily stand some sprucing up with a few vegetables.

Make the effort to increase the vegetables you eat this season. You'll be glad you did; it is the right time of year to fall in love with vegetables whether for the first time or perhaps all over again.

Contributor: Kate Loewen, Dietetic Intern with the Interlake Eastern Regional Health Authority



RECIPE

Recipe found on <http://www.foodtofit.ca/index.php?page=BlogDetail&id=90>, some slight alterations and suggestions made by Kate Loewen, dietetic intern. The idea of adding beet greens (or any other leafy green) to things you wouldn't normally think of a source of vegetables can lead to endless combinations. Adding greens to your meatballs, burgers, soups and pastas is a great way to increase your intake of B vitamins such as folate, your intake of fibre and it rarely changes the flavor of the dish! Try these, and consider adding greens to other things you make regularly!

Turkey Parmesan Meatballs with Beet Greens

Pre-heat oven to 350 F

Ingredients

1 pound ground turkey (if using frozen turkey, let it thaw in the fridge for 12-24 hours)
1 clove garlic, minced
1/4 cup onion, chopped
1 large egg
3/4 cup beet greens (without the stem), finely chopped
(you could use kale, spinach, swiss chard or collard greens here instead)
1/4 cup dried breadcrumbs or cracker crumbs
1/2 cup 100% Parmesan cheese, shredded
1 tablespoon vegetable oil
1 teaspoon parsley, dried or fresh, finely chopped
1 teaspoon oregano, dried or fresh, finely chopped

Directions

- 1) Wash your hands with soap and warm water
- 2) Add everything into a large mixing bowl and blend well with your hands
- 3) Roll into balls and place on a cookie sheet lined with parchment paper
- 4) Bake in the oven for 15 to 20 minutes (until the internal temperature of the meatball reaches 160 F).

Makes 16-20 meatballs.