

Mark's Kitchen

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Simple Cooking 101: Vegetables

A few simple techniques can help you get vegetables on the table in just minutes without a recipe. First, though, get veggie savvy!

Here are a few essential tips:

- For best taste and maximum nutrition, don't overcook your vegetables. Many vegetables can be enjoyed raw or just lightly cooked.
- Finish your vegetables with a drizzle of olive oil, coconut oil, melted clarified butter or ghee for healthy fat and flavor.
- Chopped nuts and seeds are a great way to add healthy fat to basic vegetables, as well as a nice crunch. For more flavor and eye appeal, add chopped fresh herbs and a sprinkle of sea salt, pepper, or a specialty salt like sea salt with truffle.

Here are the basics you need to know to prepare all your veggies quickly and easily.

To Blanch (cook quickly in boiling water)

Fill a large pot three-quarters full of water and bring it to a boil. Add 1 teaspoon of salt. Drop the vegetables in and cook for 1 to 3 minutes or until crisp-tender. Serve immediately. Vegetables can also be cooked ahead. When done, plunge into a bowl of ice water to stop the cooking process and then drain, dry and refrigerate. Reheat when needed.

Try blanching the vegetables for this [Veggie Stir Fry with Smashed Potatoes Recipe](#)

To Broil

Preheat the broiler on high with the oven rack one level down from the top. Arrange the vegetables on a rimmed baking sheet. Drizzle with olive oil, sea salt, and black pepper. Broil the vegetables until crisp-tender, turning once if needed. Most vegetables will take 3 to 5 minutes. Test by piercing with the tip of a sharp paring knife.

To Grill

Heat a grill pan or an outdoor grill with cleaned grates over high heat. Brush with a little oil to prevent sticking. Place the vegetables on the grill and cook, turning once, until browned but not limp. For an outdoor grill, a nonstick grill basket works great. Many vegetables like zucchini, mushrooms, tomatoes and onions, can also be skewered and then grilled. Here is a great recipe for [Grilled Chicken and Summer Vegetables](#).

To Roast

Preheat the oven to 425°F. Line a rimmed baking sheet with foil or parchment paper for easier cleanup. Toss the vegetables with olive oil and season with sea salt and pepper. Arrange in a flat layer on the baking sheet and roast until crisp-tender and the edges are browned. Times will vary by vegetable. Asparagus will take just 3 to 4 minutes, cauliflower or broccoli might take 20 to 30 minutes, and root vegetables up to 45 minutes. The smaller the pieces, the faster they cook but don't cut them too small because they will cook too quickly and burn. Try roasted vegetables for yourself in this [Roasted Broccoli and Tomatillo Salsa](#).

To Sauté

Heat a large (12-inch) sauté or frying pan over medium heat. Add 1 tablespoon of coconut oil, grass-fed butter or ghee to the pan. When the oil shimmers, add the vegetables, allowing them to cook for a minute or two, and stir. Asparagus will cook in just 3 to 4 minutes for crisp-tender and sturdier vegetables such as cauliflower will take a few minutes longer. Try out this delicious recipe with sautéed [Carrots, Hot Peppers and Shallots](#).

To Steam

Insert a steamer basket into a large (4- to 5-quart) pot. Fill the pot with several inches of water to just below the steamer rack. With a lid on, bring the water to a boil over medium-high heat. Add the vegetables to the steamer, turn the heat down to medium, and steam until crisp-tender. Most

vegetables take 2 to 5 minutes. Here is a great recipe for [Baked Fish with Steamed Butternut Squash](#).

Now it's time to get cooking!