Vegetables

Vegetables are parts of plants that are eaten by humans as food as part of a meal. This meaning is often used: it is applied to plants collectively to mean all edible plant matter, including the flowers, fruits, stems, leaves, roots, and seeds. The alternative definition of the term 'vegetable' may exclude foods derived from some plants that are fruits, nuts, and cereal grains, but include fruits from others such as tomatoes and courgettes and seeds such as pulses.

Carrots and potatoes are parts of the root systems of the plants, but since they are eaten by humans, they are vegetables. They are not in the same category as a fruit, nut, herb, spice, or grain. Though tomatoes are often thought of as vegetables, but because they have seeds, they are, botanically, fruits. Vegetables are an important part of people's daily diet. Vegetables and fruits are sometimes called produce. Vegetables have vitamins A, B, C, D, minerals and carbohydrates.

Virtually all of the more important vegetables were cultivated among the ancient civilizations of either the Old or the New World and have long been noted for their nutritional importance. Most fresh vegetables are low in calories and have a water content in excess of 70 percent, with only about 3.5 percent protein and less than 1 percent fat. Vegetables are good sources of minerals, especially calcium and iron, and vitamins, principally A and C. Nearly all vegetables are rich in dietary fibre and antioxidants.

Vegetables may be washed, sorted, graded, cut, and packaged for sale as fresh products. Fresh vegetables are subject to quick aging and spoilage, but their storage life can be extended by such preservation processes as dehydration, canning, freezing, fermenting, or pickling.