



Rosemary Slade

Mineral-Nutritional-Balancing Practitioner

The Benefits of Eating Cooked Vegetables

We all know that eating vegetables is good for us, but are you aware that their nutritional value depends somewhat on how they're prepared? While vegetables in any form are a wonderful source of vitamins, minerals, antioxidants, and fiber (both soluble and insoluble), cooked vegetables can sometimes be a more nutritious option, especially for those with sensitive digestive systems. Today, we're going to explore the benefits of cooked vegetables and why you should incorporate more delicious, cooked veggies into your daily meals.

Nutrients vs. absorption

Common wisdom says that raw vegetables contain more nutrients, so naturally, people think they're healthier for you. While that's sometimes true, the reality is more complex. When it comes to whether raw or cooked vegetables are better for you, it's not about what you eat— it's about what you absorb.

In a [2010 study](#) published in the American Journal of Clinical Nutrition, women followed either an average Western diet, a wholesome nutrition diet, or a raw food diet. The results were surprising. Participants in the raw food group consumed more beta-carotene (a crucial antioxidant) per day than any other group, but participants in the wholesome nutrition group absorbed the most beta-carotene. In other words, even though women who followed the raw food diet consumed more of beta-carotene, they reaped less of its benefits. Why is this? It all comes down to how you are digesting and absorbing the vegetables.

The benefits of cooking vegetables

While it's true that some vitamins and phytonutrients in vegetables are destroyed through the cooking process, [cooking vegetables](#) often makes many of their nutrients more accessible for your body to use. This means that, in some cases, cooking vegetables allows you to absorb more health-giving nutrients than you would through eating the same amount of raw vegetables.

Cooking vegetables can also provide you with more vital minerals and antioxidants. For example, [cooked carrots](#) contain 46.8 mg/cup of calcium while raw carrots contain 40.3 mg/cup of calcium. This is because heat releases bound calcium, making more of the mineral available for the body to absorb. Even more impressive? One [2012 study](#) found that the absorption of beta-carotene was 6.5 times greater in stir-fried carrots than in raw carrots!

Other studies have shown that cooking asparagus [boosts its antioxidant activity by 16 to 25 percent](#) and [increases its levels of phenolic acid](#), which is associated with a reduced risk of cancer. There are [plenty of examples](#) like the ones just mentioned.



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Cooking your veggies has other important benefits, too. A [2009 study](#) conducted by Harvard showed that cooking vegetables:

makes chewing easier,
increases digestibility, and
improves the net energy value of foods.

Some evidence even suggests that cooked foods contributed to the evolution of the human brain because it allowed our ancestors to consume more calories and nutrients as a result of easier chewing, digestion, and absorption of foods.

Bon appétit!

References:

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