

Ask Leyla: Why should I steam my vegetables?

Q: I know that certain ways of preparing vegetables are healthier than others, but which is the healthiest? I've heard steaming is the best – is that true? Are there benefits to eating my vegetables raw as opposed to cooked?

A: Of all the different ways to prepare vegetables (boiling, braising, stewing, roasting and grilling), steaming is probably the healthiest.



Because vegetables aren't submerged in water during the steaming process, they retain most of their nutrients. None are lost to the cooking liquid as would be in boiling, stewing or even braising. Any cooking method, however, will destroy those micronutrients affected by heat, such as some of the B vitamins.

One of the best ways to eat vegetables is raw – fine for salads, or a nice crudité platter, but it would be tough to eat certain vegetables such as Brussels sprouts and eggplant. I wouldn't recommend trying. Cooking helps to soften fibrous vegetables, making them easier to digest as well as releasing certain nutrients—like the lycopene in tomatoes. Adding a healthy fat, like a drizzle of extra virgin cold-pressed olive oil, will aid in the absorption of these nutrients, since carotenoids like lycopene are fat soluble.

So go ahead and add some good quality olive oil or a pat of grass-fed butter to your steamed vegetables, along with your favorite herbs and spices. Doing so will enhance their nutritional value and delight your taste buds too.

To your health!