

FOOD

FRESH OR FROZEN?

A veggie lover's dilemma for cold weather

by PATTI TASKO
The Canadian Press

Rose Murray loves fresh vegetables — even brussels sprouts. But the cookbook author always has a bag of frozen peas in one of her two freezers.

"That's one of the staples I always have in the house," says Murray, of Cambridge, Ont.

"When I am developing recipes — like pot pies, or minestrone soup — frozen peas are something I can always count on to add color and flavor."

Adding color, flavor and nutrients to meals in these darkening days of fall is a challenge, especially when most of the Canadian-grown fresh produce available seems to be roots of various colors.

Is it time to turn to the frozen food section? Which is a better choice nutritionally — frozen green beans or fresh green beans from California?

The fresh food industry says its stuff is tops. It's carefully handled

Food dollar

to preserve vitamins and offers better texture and flavor with reasonable prices and year-round availability.

Frozen-food advocates point out that frozen vegetables are preserved at the peak of the season, within throwing distance of a farmer's field, and never suffer the indignities of a long truck ride over half of North America. Some research indicates frozen vegetables hold vitamins better than fresh vegetables that are not eaten right away.

What's a home cook to believe? Let's hear from the fresh foodies, first.

"Not everything comes from California in the wintertime," says Susan Sutherland, a dietitian who works in Ottawa for the Fresh for Flavor Foundation, which represents the fresh produce industry.

"Some comes from Florida and that's a shorter haul."

Sutherland says rigorous standards applied to the handling of vegetables from the field to the retailer ensure a minimum loss of vitamins. Green beans, for instance, should arrive in stores no more than five days from time of picking, often less. As with all produce, they are cooled on site and transported in refrigerated trucks, which helps maintain their vitamin C content.

Hardier vegetables, such as broccoli and cauliflower, are still nutritionally sound at two weeks and four weeks old, respectively, she says.

"If broccoli is misted and kept cool, it will retain vitamin C."

She also says many fresh vegetables available now, from beets to leeks to turnip, are Canadian-grown and have been kept in cold storage, although Atlantic Canadians will find root vegetables

from Florida as well. These vegetables are good sources of fibre, folate and vitamins A, B and C.

The only vegetable picked before its prime — even if it is coming from somewhere as far-flung as Mexico or Chile — is the tomato, Sutherland says. And as tomatoes ripen during transport, their vitamin C content improves.

Frozen foodies point to research which shows vitamin C, critical in fighting infections, and folate, a B vitamin which builds immunity and blood, deteriorate rapidly after harvest.

"Frozen stored products would retain all of the vitamin qualities they had when first frozen," says Doug Goff, who studies the freezing of food at the University of Guelph.

Processing methods complicate matters, however. Frozen vegetables are blanched (dropped into boiling water for a few minutes),

which kills off one-third of heat-sensitive vitamin C, says Goff.

"But that is balanced off by the same loss when a (home cook) peels the carrots and boils them for 20 minutes."

Both Goff and Sutherland agree

that the cook is often the worst enemy of the vegetable, be it fresh or frozen.

"They can cook them all to death," says Sutherland.

Using large amounts of water, for instance, leaches out nutrients.

Vegetable recipes with a difference

by The Canadian Press

Try these tasty vegetable recipes:

Sweet and Sour Cabbage

This low-fat side dish, from the book Peasant's Choice by James Barber, includes green cabbage, a good source of vitamin C, folate and fibre.

30 ml (2 tbsp) olive oil
half a green cabbage, cored and shredded
1 can (370 ml, 13 oz) chopped tomatoes

15 ml (1 tbsp) honey
2.5 ml (1/2 tsp) salt
1 onion, chopped
5 ml (1 tsp) pepper
30 ml (2 tbsp) capers (optional)
15 ml (1 tbsp) vinegar
Preheat oven to 375 degrees.

Heat the oil in a frypan and saute the onion until softened. Add the cabbage and black pepper and stir until well coated. Add the tomatoes, capers, honey, vinegar and salt, stir well and pour into a baking dish. Bake for 20 minutes until bubbling.

Hash Brown Parsnips with Scallions and Jalapenos

Tender care pays off

Fresh or frozen, vegetables need tender, loving cooking if vitamins and other nutrients are to be preserved. Some suggestions:

- Shredding, cutting and dicing all cut down on vitamin content as more of the vegetable is exposed to air. Avoid buying pre-cut fresh vegetables.
- Cook vegetables only until tender-crisp.
- Steam, microwave or stir-fry for best flavor and nutrition.
- If you must boil, use as little water as possible.
- Use deep-frying sparingly. It adds unnecessary fat and may destroy nutrients.

The fat end of parsnips have a woody core that should be cut out and discarded. This makes six generous servings. From The Complete Vegetable Cookbook, by Lorraine Bodger (Harmony Books, New York, 1989).

1-1.4 kg (2 1/2-3 lbs) parsnips, trimmed and peeled
6 scallions (green and white parts), trimmed and sliced finely
15 ml (1 tbsp) minced pickled jalapeno (produces a fiery dish; use less for mild flavoring)
salt and pepper

Rutabaga a nutritional goldmine

by The Canadian Press

What rutabagas lack in glamor, they make up for richly in beta carotene, vitamin C and flavor. In her new book Almost Vegetarian, Diana Shaw combines the sorry looking vegetable with potatoes for a main course dish. The book, published by Potter, sells in Canada for \$25.

Simple Baked Rutabagas

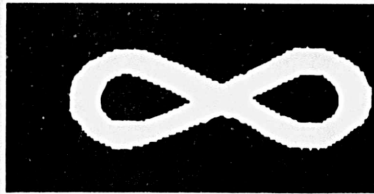
450 g (1 lb.) peeled rutabaga, diced
450 g (1 lb.) peeled medium-starch potatoes, such as Yukon Gold or Yellow Finn, diced

2 large eggs, lightly beaten
375 mL (1 1/2 cups) low-fat cottage cheese
125 mL (1/2 cup) shredded cheddar cheese
30 mL (2 tbsp.) minced chives

Heat oven to 190 C (375 F). In steamer, cook rutabagas and potatoes until soft enough to pierce easily with a knife. Transfer to a food processor and puree. Add eggs, cottage cheese and cheddar cheese and process again until smooth. Blend in chives.

Spread mixture into an 20.5 cm (8-inch) square baking pan, and bake until firm, about 45 minutes. Let rest 15 minutes before cutting and serving.

CITIZEN Marketplace 562-6666



METIS TRIPARTITE CONSULTANT

In March of 1993, Metis from across B.C. came together in Fort St. John in an historical meeting to form the Metis Tripartite Secretariat. The purpose was to unite the Two Largest Metis Groups in order to begin negotiations with the Federal and Provincial Governments. Part of this process includes a community consultation process in order to get input from Metis People all across B.C. There will be a public meeting in your area so that you may give us direction on how best to proceed. We would encourage all Metis to attend these meetings and participate in this historic process.

Tuesday, November 22, 1994

Formal Community Consultation Meeting
10:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.

Informal Community Consultation Meeting
1:30 p.m. to 4:00 p.m.
(Refreshments Served During the 2 Refreshment Breaks)

Social Evening: 7:30 p.m. to 9:30 p.m.
Refreshments Served

Location for Both Events: Coast Inn of the North
770 Brunswick Street
Prince George, B.C.

Welcome Santa Claus Saturday, Nov. 19th 12:00 Noon

Santa and his Elves will have treats for the kids

Santa's Hours: Saturday Nov. 19th 12:00 - 1:30 pm 3:00 - 4:30 pm

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