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Roasting Vegetables 101: *basic guidelines and three great recipes* by Sandra Ahten

Over the years I've developed a taste for a variety of vegetables. I lightly steam some and eat many raw. I stir-fry most. I bake potatoes, yams and squash. But it was only this year that I discovered the delight of roasting vegetables. Wow!

I simply can't believe I've not known about this amazing and uncomplicated technique. I attribute it to the fact that it is not a common preparation technique used in most restaurants – probably because of the oven-time factor involved. But it is so worth it. It absolutely locks in the flavor, and, when done correctly, the vegetables start to caramelize and get a nice crispiness to them. The flavor of herbs and spices are also enhanced.

I like the fact that with a few guidelines you can create your own great recipes that will appeal to you and your family's personal preferences.

Basic Guidelines:

~~ Have a big enough pan for the vegetables. You want them to be in a single layer. Stacking them causes the vegetables on the bottom to steam the ones on the top, and they won't caramelize. If you have to -- use two pans.

~~ Use a non-stick pan, if possible, in order to use less oil and for ease of clean up. Parchment paper also works.

~~No lid.

~~A very hot oven is key. I usually roast at 450 degrees. (See my note on lighter weight vegetables below.)

~~Allow about 50 minutes for roasting. Usually a big pan will take only about 35- 45 minutes, but make sure you do not undercook. If they get done sooner, simply shut off the oven and keep them warm until serving time.

~~Toss just once or twice during the course of roasting.

~~ Olive oil. This is a consistent ingredient for me, unless I am using a prepared marinade. I find 1-2 tablespoons is enough for about 10 cups of vegetables. Never pour without measuring. Use a spritzer with olive oil, instead of pouring as great calorie-saving convenience.

Choosing and preparing vegetables:

~~ Use your imagination. I like creating colorful mixes. A variety of colors ensures a variety of nutrients, as well as a beautiful dish.

~~ For lighter-weight vegetables such as cabbage, broccoli or cut corn that is being roasted with other vegetables -- add it to the pan 15 minutes later, so it doesn't get too brown. If roasting alone, roast at 375 degrees and start checking for doneness at 20 minutes.

~~ Greens. I especially like kale and mustard greens. If roasting alone, these will be done in about 15 minutes. If roasting with heartier vegetables add them 30 minutes after starting the other vegetables.

~~ Green beans. The only vegetable I parboil first.

~~Brussels sprouts. Simply cut in them in half. I consider these a delicacy.

~~ Zucchini, yellow squash, eggplant. Cut them in large bite-size pieces (They shrink a lot.) I keep the skins on unless they are blemished.

~~ Peppers. Cut in strips. Red, yellow or orange peppers are so flavorful.

~~ Mushrooms. Button mushrooms are fine (just chop them in half) but also try some more exotic varieties including portabella, oyster or shitake.

~~ Roots: potatoes, sweet potatoes, parsnips, turnips, carrots, radishes should be cut in bite-size pieces of about 1 inch. Slice red, yellow or white onions. Chop green onions, leeks or scallions. Pearl onions.

~~ Winter squash. I generally don't include with mixes of roasted vegetables, because it is difficult to peel and cut up. Instead I will cut it in half, remove the seeds and roast it alone.

~~ Corn on the cob. Snap the corn in halves or thirds, then toss with other vegetables or roast whole alone.

~~ Cherry or other tomatoes.

Additional optional ingredients:

~~ Newman's Own Sesame Ginger salad dressing. Toss approximately one-half cup per 10 cups of vegetables.

~~ Balsamic or red wine vinegar.

~~ Apricot fruit spread or honey, to enhance the caramelizing process.

~~ Polenta. You can find polenta, which is "corn-meal mush" in a sausage like tube, in the vegetarian or health food section of the grocer. Cut it in one-inch pieces.

~~ Pasta. Prepare a whole wheat pasta like rotini or shells and add it to the vegetables. For good calorie control use only about 1 cup prepared for a huge pan of 10 or more cups of vegetables.

~~ Wild rice. As with the pasta, prepare in advance and then toss a small amount with the vegetables before roasting.

~~ Pine nuts. I use these sparingly because they are pricey. But a few, tossed in during the last 20 minutes of roasting are a wonderful treat.

~~ Herbs and spices. Use fresh herbs, when possible. I use a lot of the Italian family including basil, rosemary and thyme. Curry, paprika and turmeric are also good. I'll add grated ginger or diced garlic to almost anything.

In order to make it a complete meal, you can add a protein source.

-- Garbanzo beans.

-- Black beans.

-- Tofu. I use one-half of a block of firm, low-fat tofu crumbled with the veggies.

-- Nuts.

-- Shrimp.

-- Chicken breast.

And for a final treat I'll sprinkle with Parmesan cheese before serving.

Three Great (Sandra invented) Recipes

Parsley Potatoes

1 ½ pounds potatoes (with thin skin)
1 cup fresh parsley leaves (tightly packed) = 1/2 cupped finely chopped
1 tsp. salt
3/4 tsp. cracked black pepper
1.5 Tbs. Olive oil

- 1 Preheat oven to 450°.
- 2 Dice potatoes into small bite size pieces.
- 3 Toss with finely chopped parsley, oil, salt and pepper
- 4 Roast in a shallow pan in a single layer for 35 minutes or until toasty brown.

Servings: 4

Yield: 4 cups

Preparation time: 15 minutes

Cooking time: 35 minutes

Ready in: 50 minutes

Nutrition Facts

Nutrition (per serving): 222.7 calories; 20% calories from fat; 5.2g total fat; 0.0mg cholesterol; 601.2mg sodium; 1263.6mg potassium; 41.6g carbohydrates; 3.4g fiber; 0.1g sugar; 38.3g net carbs; 4.7g protein.

Italian Veggies with Pasta

2 cups whole wheat pasta (such as rotini)
1 cup chopped red onion
2 cups cherry tomatoes (cut in half)
6 ounces portini mushrooms (cut in half)
2 cups zucchinis or yellow squash (in bite size pieces)
1 ½ cups sweet red Italian pepper (in thin strips or bite size pieces)
1 Tbs. rosemary, dried
2 Tbs. Italian spices, mixed, dry
2 Tbs. Olive Oil
1 tsp. salt
1 tsp. pepper
¼ cup Parmesan Cheese

- 1 Preheat oven to 450°
- 2 Toss prepared pasta and prepared vegetables with spices and oil.
- 3 Roast in a shallow non-stick pan for approximately 35 minutes or until vegetables are tender and starting to brown.
- 4 Serve with parmesan cheese.

Servings: 3

Yield: 6 cups

Preparation time: 20 minutes

Cooking time: 40 minutes

Ready in: 1 hour

Nutrition Facts

Nutrition (per serving): 246.3 calories; 14% calories from fat; 4.2g total fat; 7.3mg cholesterol; 154.5mg sodium; 843.8mg potassium; 45.2g carbohydrates; 10.1g fiber; 6.4g sugar; 35.1g net carbs; 13.3g protein.

Cooking Tips

Use fresh herbs instead of dried, if possible.

Summer Spectrum

- 3 ears corn on the cob
- 4 cups (about 15) Brussels sprouts
- 1 each red pepper
- 1 each scallion, finely chopped
- 1 Tbs. garlic, finely chopped
- 3 Tbs. olive oil
- 2 Tbs. Balsamic vinegar

- 1 Preheat oven to 450°
- 2 Break ears of corn in halves or thirds.
- 3 Cut Brussels sprouts in half and cut off tough ends.
- 4 Cut red pepper in thin strips.
- 5 Toss all ingredients together and roast in a shallow non-stick pan, or pan lined with parchment paper.

Servings: 4

Yield: 8 cups

Preparation time: 15 minutes

Cooking time: 30 minutes

Ready in: 45 minutes

Nutrition Facts

Nutrition (per serving): 230.0 calories; 42% calories from fat; 11.2g total fat; 0.0mg cholesterol; 28.6mg sodium; 684.1mg potassium; 32.6g carbohydrates; 6.5g fiber; 2.8g sugar; 26.1g net carbs; 6.5g protein.