

Retaining Nutrients

Ideas to help retain and get the maximum nutrients from your ready meal.

Cooking

Some vitamins dissolve in water (B Vitamins & Vitamin C). Steaming, microwaving, roasting or grilling fruit and vegetables is preferable to boiling them.

Retain the vitamins in vegetables by keeping them in the water they are cooked in e.g., soups, stews or sauces. You can also use excess water for making vegetable stock.

Cut cooking times. Generally, the longer foods are exposed to heat the more nutrients are lost.

Using lids on pans, placing veg in already boiling water and eating them a little bit crunchier helps to preserve nutrients.

Some nutrients are increased by cooking them. Certain antioxidants found in tomatoes and red, yellow and orange vegetables (e.g., carrots, butternut squash and peppers) are better absorbed when cooked. Steaming, microwave, roasting or grilling these vegetables will help to retain the water-soluble vitamins too.

Fat soluble vitamins (A, D, E & K) are better absorbed when cooked or prepared with a source of healthy fats. For example, using vegetable or olive oil to sauté veg or as a salad dressing will increase absorption of these vitamins.

Storing

Nutrient loss in many fruits and vegetables can be decreased with cooler temperatures and less air contact.

Store produce in airtight containers in the fridge.

Keep vegetables in the crisper section of the refrigerator.

Preparing

When preparing fresh vegetables, wash gently but don't soak. Soaking decreases some of the water-soluble vitamins.

Keep the skins on fruit and veg where possible to increase the fibre and nutrient content.

Where possible prepare fruit and vegetables just prior to cooking to decrease exposure to oxygen and light which can decrease nutrients.

Pairing

Serve iron rich foods with foods high in vitamin C, this helps our bodies better absorb the iron in food (especially plant-based iron).

Iron rich foods include meat, beans, pulses, fortified cereal, dark green leafy veg and nuts.

Vitamin C rich foods include citrus fruit, peppers, kiwi, berries, broccoli and potatoes. Try adding red peppers into a bean chilli or some green leafy veg with lentil dhal or nut roast.

