



BROCCOLI TALKING POINTS

2. A Spear of Broccoli History

- Broccoli has been around for over 2,000 years and has been grown in the United States for more than 200 years.
- Broccoli was **first grown along the Mediterranean coast near Italy**.
- The son of Roman Emperor Tiberius was so infatuated with broccoli that he refused to eat all other foods except broccoli à la apicius (a mixture of cumin, coriander seeds, chopped onion, oil and sun-made wine) for an entire month.
- Broccoli was **first introduced to France in the 1500s and to England in 1720**. According to his diary in the late 1700s, Thomas Jefferson (the third U.S. President) was an avid gardener and seed collector and grew broccoli at his Virginia home, Monticello, prior to taking office in 1801.
- Despite its popularity through the years, few people knew about broccoli in the United States until the 1920s, when the **first commercially grown broccoli** was grown and harvested in **Brooklyn, New York**.
- In 1923, two brothers named Stefano and Andrea D'Arrigo from Messing, Italy, made a trial planting of Italian sprouting broccoli in **San Jose, California**. A few crates were sent to Boston and by **1925 the broccoli market was established**. The D'Arrigo brothers were the first commercial growers in the West to successfully grow and ship box loads of broccoli. They created a distinctive brand name for their broccoli — “Andy Boy” — and put a photo of Stefano’s two-year-old son, Andrew, on the label. Theirs was the first fresh produce company in the United States to use a brand name in advertising. Today, **more than 90 percent of commercially-produced broccoli for the United States is grown in California**.

3. How Does Broccoli Grow?

- Broccoli is usually grown from seeds. Planting is done by direct seeding or by transplanting seedlings started in a greenhouse. Most varieties reach maturity in 100 to 120 days. Bright yellow flower clusters form on **two to two-and-a-half feet tall broccoli plants**. There are four sepals, six stamens, two carpals and four petals. Flowers are pollinated mostly by bees.
- Broccoli roots grow near the soil surface. Maintaining adequate moisture and nitrogen is essential for continuous rapid growth. Broccoli plants will grow in almost any soil but prefer an acidic pH level between 6.0 and 7.0. A well-drained, sandy loam soil rich in organic matter is ideal.
- Since the roots are shallow, irrigation should be frequent but light. **Broccoli is harvested during the cooler months** in order to ensure the longest storage time. **It is cut with eight to 10 inches of stem left intact and the heads are cooled immediately to prevent opening and discoloration.**

4. What season do we pick broccoli?

- **Broccoli is a cool season crop**. It can be **grown as a spring or fall crop**, but it is susceptible to frost, especially when the plants are small and tender. The optimal time for planting is with day temperatures between 60 F to 70 F and night temperatures between 50 F to 60 F. Temperatures below freezing for periods of 36

hours or longer will generally kill broccoli plants. Broccoli is most abundant from October through May in California.

- **In South Dakota, seedlings should be planted in late April, and moved outside after May 15th.**

5. Why should we eat Broccoli?

- Broccoli is known as the “Crown Jewel of Nutrition” because it is rich in vitamins and minerals.
- One cup of raw chopped broccoli provides
 - **Vitamin C**, promoting healing and a healthy immune system.
 - **Vitamin A**, a central component of vision health.
 - **Vitamin K**, helps stop cuts and wounds and helps lower risk of infection.
 - **Beta carotene**, to boost the enzymes in our bodies that detoxify and prevent the formation of cancer-causing carcinogens.
 - **Potassium, folate, iron and soluble fiber**, which aid in everything from vision and growth to circulation and digestion.
- Eating a variety of colorful fruits and vegetables and getting daily physical activity can help your family stay healthy, feel good, and may lower the risk of serious health problems like obesity, type 2 diabetes, heart disease, and certain types of cancer.
- Broccoli contains natural sodium. Some of the most basic work your body does depends on sodium: maintaining proper fluid balance; controlling the movement of fluids in and out of your cells; regulating your blood pressure; transmitting nerve impulses; and helping your muscles relax, including your heart muscle.
- Packaged frozen broccoli differs from fresh in its nutrient content. The flower buds or florets are richer in beta-carotene than the stalks. Manufacturers typically cut off most of the stalk before packaging it, so frozen broccoli may contain 35% more beta-carotene by weight than fresh broccoli. The downside is that frozen broccoli has twice as much sodium as fresh (up to 68 mg per 10 oz. package), about half the calcium, and smaller amounts of iron, thiamin, riboflavin, and vitamin C.

6. How do you pick good Broccoli?

- Look for a firm stem and tight, compact florets that are dark green.
- Store unwashed broccoli in an open plastic bag and place in the refrigerator for up to five days.
- Rinse (don't soak) broccoli under cool water just before using.
- **Steam, microwave, grill or stir-fry broccoli. Boiling causes 25%-35% loss of nutrients.**

Fun Facts

- Broccoli is a plant of the cabbage family, Brassicaceae, formerly known as Cruciferae. It is classified as part of the Brassica oleracea Italica Group and is related to cabbage, cauliflower, kale, collard greens and Brussels sprouts.
- Eventually, the vegetable was **named brocco in Italian, meaning branch or arm.** The word broccolo is the diminutive form of brocco and refers to cabbage sprout, while broccoli is plural and refers to the numerous flower-like shoots that form the

head of the plant. In agricultural terms, it is often referred to as a cole crop, meaning that it is grown for the head it produces.

- People worldwide are eating over 940% more broccoli today than 25 years ago.
- Today, the average person in the United States eats 4.5 pounds of broccoli each year.
- Broccoli is one of the most popular garden vegetables to date, mostly because it is very easy to grow.

Healthy Serving Ideas

- Add chopped broccoli and your choice of vegetables to scrambled eggs. Wrap the eggs in a whole wheat tortilla and sprinkle with lowfat cheese for a quick and tasty breakfast burrito.
- Pour lemon juice or sprinkle low fat parmesan cheese over steamed broccoli.
- Top pizza with chopped broccoli before putting it in the oven.
- Toss chopped broccoli with chopped cabbage, shredded carrots, sliced bell peppers, chicken, and some sesame dressing for a zesty Asian chicken salad.