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food ideas

Quick, Fast and Easy: Steaming

By Madeleine Greey | 26/05/2006



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The Chinese have been relying on steaming for centuries, so what's stopping Canadians from catching on to this healthy, easy technique? Now's your chance to taste flavour-packed, al dente vegetables, juicy chicken and silky mouthfuls of moist, tender fish. Once you get steaming, you'll be hooked by the results.

Steamy Principles

When food is placed in a steamer utensil at least one inch/2.5 cm above boiling water, it's surrounded by steam and cooked gently. Because the food is not immersed in water, vitamins such as C and B (both water soluble) cannot escape as easily as they do when food is boiled.

Vegetables retain more of their crunchy texture and meats, poultry and fish stay moist and tender.

Get Outfitted!

- Expandable, metal steaming baskets are inexpensive and widely available. These are great for vegetables, whether it's broccoli,

You want a serving... not a spoonful.



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asparagus spears, sugar snap peas, red bell peppers, cabbage and more.

- Bamboo steamer baskets (available in any Asian supermarket and many kitchen stores) are more versatile, since you can place a shallow, heatproof bowl inside to cook foods in a sauce or marinade. These baskets are stackable and it's wise to get equipped with two tiers to increase your steaming potential (think halibut in black bean sauce steaming on one tier, while baby bok choy cooks below). Bamboo, slatted baskets fit on top of a wok, frying pan or a pot filled with water.
- Stainless steel, stovetop tiered steamers that include both a base and tiers are easy to clean up. Besides, these have a deep base, making it possible to boil noodles in the base full of boiling water, while also steaming veggies or meat, on top!
- A wide range of electric steamers are available with features such as a thermostat and timer, making steaming even more convenient.

Trade Secrets

Steaming requires no butter, oil or added fat in order to cook food. That's why it's so healthy. Bump up the flavour-factor with fat-free marinades or dressings, lots of freshly chopped herbs, plus Chinese sauces like soy, oyster, black bean or hoisin.

Steamy Suggestions

- Food parcels wrapped in pleated parchment paper or aluminum foil are perfect for steaming. Team up a chicken breast, red pepper strips, and thinly sliced leek. Drizzle with low-fat dressing and steam for 20 minutes.
- Look for dim sum in Asian or some regular supermarket freezer shelves. Steam them up and serve at a party or as a light meal with steamed veggies.
- Canadian seafood is custom-made for the steamer! Nothing can be easier than heating up frozen lobster tails and crab legs or giving mussels and oysters the steam treatment.
- Try this: In a heat proof, shallow bowl place an Atlantic salmon fillet, topped with thinly sliced ginger and green onions. Mix one tablespoon each of soy sauce and cooking sherry, plus a teaspoon each of sugar and sesame oil. Whisk together and drizzle on top. Steam for 10 minutes or until the fish starts to flake.

Next Steps

Now that you've read up on steaming, it's time to put this technique to use in your kitchen! Try preparing our [Steamed New Potatoes with Lemon and Dill](#). These moist and tender potatoes are the perfect side for any main meal.

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