

[IMAGE]

The Art of Juicing (and Pureeing)

By Claudia Anrig, DC

We know that the process of cooking vegetables destroys valuable micronutrients by altering their shape and chemical composition; but is it possible to eat enough *raw* vegetables to get the nutrition your body needs? That's where juicing can be valuable.

Why Juicing?

The benefits of juicing are wide and varied, beginning with the fact that you can consume the most beneficial amounts of vegetables efficiently while absorbing all of the available nutrients. A habitually poor diet will eventually make your body less efficient at absorbing the maximum available nutrients in the foods you consume. By juicing vegetables, it's almost like they've been pre-digested, so you can receive the most nutrients available.

Additionally, we all know how difficult it can be to get children in particular to eat their vegetables; providing them in an easy-to-drink, flavorful juice can help with that problem. Another recommendation is to freeze the juice into popsicles. Although freezing the juice will damage some of the nutrients, the benefits (especially compared to the alternative – not eating any vegetables) are still really high.

Juicer Basics

The first step for many families is buying a juicer. There are a numerous options, ranging in price from \$100 to thousands of dollars. A high-quality juicer will be an extractor that extracts the flesh from the vegetables and then spins the juice out.

The Art of Juicing - Copyright © Stock Photo / Register Mark Clean-up time is an important consideration. Some machines will actually allow pulp to get into little nooks and crannies; if this happens, clean-up time is doubled and sometimes tripled because that pulp will rot if not removed and will require practically dismantling the machine to clean it. An extensive cleaning time could discourage you from juicing on a regular basis. A high-quality juicer should take no more than 5 minutes per use to clean.

The other consideration is speed. We all think that faster is better; when it comes to juicing, this is not the case. Inexpensive juicers are typically centrifugal and will spin at really high speeds to extract the juice. I do not recommend juicers that act more like blenders because the heat generated by the higher RPMs can actually damage the valuable nutrients, almost like cooking. Additionally, low-speed / single-gear machines will create a lot less foam, making the juice more palatable.

What to Juice?

After you've decided which juicer to purchase, the most important decision is what to actually put in the juicer. Things to consider: the greener the better; remember that fruit is high glycemic and can raise blood sugar; and never supplement your juice with bottled juice, as this defeats the purpose.

Buy organic whenever possible and look for local farmers or co-ops that grow their products seasonally. And don't be surprised at the amount of vegetables it is going to take to create the one small glass of raw juice.

If you're new to juicing, the best vegetables to start with are celery, fennel or cucumbers. These are easy to digest and tolerate. Once you've become accustomed to juicing you can begin to add red-leaf, green-leaf or romaine lettuce, endive, escarole or spinach, and then cabbage or bok choy. Remember that cabbage can be a digestive irritant, so don't use too much at a time.

Adding herbs to your juicing can give you different flavors. Herbs to consider include parsley and cilantro. For a sweet, but low-glycemic flavor, consider adding lemons, limes, cranberries or fresh ginger.

To really boost the nutritional value of your juice, consider using either kale or collard, dandelion or mustard greens; however, be aware that these are very bitter tasting, so only use two leaves and be sure to add one of the above natural sweeteners. Specifically, a quarter to a half of a lime with its rind will counteract some of that bitterness.

I don't recommend using oranges, as they are high glycemic, but if you choose to do so, do not juice the rinds, as they are typically high in absorbed pesticides. The same is true for grapefruit; although these are great to juice, do not use the rinds.

What Else Should You Know?

Remember that there is essentially no protein in vegetables and virtually no fat. While this might sound great, this means that juicing cannot be a meal in and of itself, particularly for young children. So when drinking juice with a meal, be sure to always include a healthy protein option.

Cherie Colbom, author of the books *Juicing for Life* and *Turbo Diet*, has said that when she first started juicing, she felt worse before she felt better due to detox reactions. "You are going to be losing fat and when those fat cells are breaking down and all those toxins are getting released, you need a lot of antioxidants to get them out of your system and render them harmless. That's where juicing is just powerful." Although this may be more true for adults who've accumulated years of poor eating, you still might want to start children off with a quarter cup of juice every other day and monitor their energy and behavior after consuming their drink before increasing their intake.

Finally, keep in mind that once you've juiced it, drink it. Once you've juiced, the nutrients progressively begin to break down. Ideally, juice should be consumed within 12 hours of being made, but to truly take advantage of all that it offers, it really should be consumed immediately. The only way to actually properly store your juice is using a vacuum sealing system. However, even using something like this only really allows you up to 24 hours.

Purees: The Secret Way to Ensure Adequate Vegetable Intake

In the past few years, many young parents have returned to making their own baby food for their children. Selecting organic and seasonal vegetables and fruits for their infant, and then taking the time to prepare them, has become a very popular and often a more inexpensive option for many households.

To puree, start by steaming your favorite veggies until you can pierce them easily with a fork (usually after about 5 to 10 minutes, maximum). You can use a rice steamer or put a small amount of water in the bottom of a pan and put the veggies in a steamer basket on top of the pan.

After draining the vegetable, puree the item with a food processor or blender, and then store / freeze the puree in sealed baggies. You can then take wonderful veggies like cauliflower, broccoli, beets, butternut squash, zucchini and summer squash, sweet potatoes, spinach, red bell peppers and carrots and mix them into any meal, oftentimes without anyone even noticing. Placing a half cup of any puree may give you and your family the nutrients they are missing.

One retailer, Williams-Sonoma, now offers a BPA-free, 4-cup-capacity bowl with automatic steamer-blender and defroster. This same retailer also carries *The baby & toddler cookbook-fresh homemade foods for a healthy start* to provide a variety of ideas for young parents. And Jessica Seinfeld, in her book, *Deceptively Delicious*," provides great ideas to take pureed vegetables and sneak them into everyday meals.

Americans young and old are suffering the health consequences of poor diets and low nutrient consumption. Think about it: How close are you to the recommended "5-a-Day" of fruits and vegetables? If you're not meeting the guidelines – or not even coming close – juicing could be for you. Talk to your doctor of chiropractic to learn more about the essentials of sound nutrition and what you can do to ensure your body gets the nutrition it needs to function optimally.

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