Broccoli, Brussels sprouts, and cauliflower are among the closely related vegetables referred to as cole crops or the cabbage family. These cruciferous vegetables are full of important nutrients and cancer fighting antioxidants. Early broccoli is available from June 15 to July 1 while late broccoli is at peak from September 15 to October 15. Cauliflower is at peak September 1 to November 15. Brussels sprouts are at peak during June and July.

Selection

Select garden-fresh produce. Leaves and stems of broccoli heads should be dark green. Look for tender, young stalks that are firm with compact buds in the head. Yellow flowers in buds or very rough bumpy heads may indicate broccoli is old and tough.

High-quality cauliflower is usually white or creamy white. A hint of green and purple is common and presents no danger or flavor problems. Heads should be clean, firm, and compact with fresh, green outer leaves. Small leaves extending through the head do not affect eating quality. Large or small heads, equally mature, are equally desirable. “Ricy” condition is considered poor quality in the industry. Heads should be tight and smooth. A spotted, speckled, or bruised head should be avoided.

Brussels sprouts should be firm, green, not yellow, compact and about 1 inch in diameter.

Yield

Due to many variables, including moisture content, size, and variety, it is impossible to give specific recommendations as to quantity to buy. The recommendations below are approximations.

- **Broccoli**—1 crate equals 25 pounds and yields 24–25 pints; 4 servings equals 1½ pounds.
- **Brussels sprouts**—4 quart boxes equal 6 pounds, 1 pound yields 1 pint; 4 servings equal 1½ pounds.
- **Cauliflower**—1½ bushel crate equals 37 pounds; 2 medium heads equal 3 pints, 1½ pounds equal 1 pint. 4 servings equal 1 medium head—about 2 pounds.

Contact your local county Extension office for variety recommendations for Ohio.

Nutrition

The Recommended Dietary Allowances indicate that adults need 2–2½ cups of a variety of vegetables daily. Broccoli, cauliflower, and Brussels sprouts are excellent choices to meet this nutritional requirement. These vegetables are classified as cruciferous and have
abundant antioxidants that help prevent cancer and fight heart disease. Broccoli and Brussels sprouts are excellent sources of Vitamins A and C, potassium, folate, and fiber. Cauliflower is a good source of Vitamins K and C, folate, fiber, and potassium. Brussels sprouts also provide a good source of iron. These vegetables are low in calories with a one cup serving of cooked broccoli having 45 calories. One cup of cooked cauliflower has 30 calories and one cup of cooked Brussels sprouts has 60 calories.

Safe Handling
Clean surfaces, utensils, and hands after touching raw meat and poultry and before you use them on fresh produce. Remove leaves and blemishes. Wash just before using. To remove dirt, wash vegetables thoroughly in cold water. To remove insects and worms, soak vegetables head down for 30 minutes in cold, salted water (add 1 teaspoon salt to each quart water). Drain and rinse several times. Do not use soap, detergent, or bleach as they can be absorbed by vegetables. Lift vegetables from the water to prevent redepositing of dirt and residues.

Serving
- **Broccoli**—Peel coarse stalks and split stalks larger than 1 inch in diameter or cut into uniform pieces.
- **Brussels sprouts**—Sort for uniformity into small, medium, and large sizes.
- **Cauliflower**—Break flowerets into uniform pieces about 1 inch across. Remove any spotted, damaged pieces.

Because vitamin C is lost in water, cook vegetables rapidly in small amounts of liquid just until fork tender—about 8 to 10 minutes after water returns to a boil. A general rule is 1/2 cup water for 2 cups vegetable.

Serving Ideas
Raw broccoli and cauliflower florets can be included on relish plates and in salads to add variety in color and texture.

For cooked vegetables, season with lemon butter by combining 1 Tablespoon lemon juice with 1 Tablespoon melted butter or margarine. Pour over broccoli, Brussels sprouts, or cauliflower just before serving. Or sprinkle with 1–2 Tablespoons olive oil.

For a colorful cooked vegetable, combine broccoli and cauliflower florets with carrot coins. Cook until tender crisp. Season to taste.

For a meal accompaniment, garnish, or relish—marinate raw cauliflower florets in Italian dressing overnight. Drain well before serving.

Cooking with Herbs
- **Broccoli**—caraway seed, dill, mustard seed, tarragon, basil, curry powder, nutmeg, or oregano.
- **Brussels sprouts**—basil, caraway seed, dill, mustard seed, sage, thyme, curry powder, nutmeg, garlic salt, cumin, marjoram, or savory.
- **Cauliflower**—caraway seed, celery salt, dill, mace, tarragon, rosemary, parsley flakes, basil, curry powder, nutmeg, or poppy seed.

Written by Barbara A. Brahm, Extension Educator, Family and Consumer Sciences
Reviewed by Lydia Medeiros, Ph.D., R.D., Extension Specialist, Ohio State University Extension

EMPOWERMENT THROUGH EDUCATION
Visit Ohio State University Extension’s web site “Ohioline” at: http://ohioline.osu.edu

Ohio State University Extension embraces human diversity and is committed to ensuring that all research and related educational programs are available to clientele on a nondiscriminatory basis without regard to race, color, religion, sex, age, national origin, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, disability, or veteran status. This statement is in accordance with United States Civil Rights Laws and the USDA.

Keith L. Smith, Ph.D., Associate Vice President for Agricultural Administration and Director, Ohio State University Extension
TDD No. 800-589-8292 (Ohio only) or 614-292-1868

Copyright © 2009, The Ohio State University