



NEWS RELEASE

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Get your 'five-or-more-a-day' the grillin' way

*By Kay Blakley,
DeCA home economist*

FORT LEE, Va. – When it comes to grilling, most of us think of steaks, chops, chicken or ribs. But you're missing out on some of the best eating of the season if you fail to include fresh vegetables grilled right alongside your main dish. It's a perfect way to make sure you get the recommended five or more servings from the fruit and vegetable food groups each day.

You'll also be missing out on some of the very best prices in town, if you don't buy those veggies at the commissary. Remember, we aim to give you overall savings of 30 percent or more, just by consistent shopping at the commissary.

Almost any vegetable you would normally steam, boil or sauté can be cooked on the grill – potatoes, zucchini and yellow squash, sweet peppers and onions, all varieties of mushrooms, fresh corn grilled in the husk, even tomatoes, are all prime candidates for grilling. Sometimes the vegetables can even be the main dish. Such is the case with portobello mushrooms, which are so large and meaty they are often considered the steaks of the mushroom family.

Cabbage cooked on the grill develops a delicious sweetness you'll never be able to duplicate by any other cooking method, and even though I'm normally not fond of eggplant, I love it cooked on the grill. Try your hand at grilling vegetables, and you're sure to come up with a few of your own favorites, as well.

Grilling vegetables couldn't be easier, and success is almost guaranteed as long as you keep these few tips in mind:

- Grill vegetables over a medium to hot fire. A charcoal fire is ready when the coals are completely covered in gray ash—usually about 30 minutes after the fire is lit.
- Vegetables can be halved, quartered or cut into rounds, but the trick is to cut all pieces roughly the same thickness (no thicker than 3/4 - 1-inch) so all will cook evenly, and all will reach the desired degree of doneness at about the same time.
- Be careful not to overcook. Depending on the vegetable and its thickness, a total grilling time of two to five minutes per side is sufficient.
- Brushing vegetables with olive or vegetable oil will keep them from sticking to the grate. If olive oil is your choice, use one labeled for cooking – extra-virgin olive oil is too delicate to stand up to the heat of the grill and will burn.
- Certain items such as asparagus, eggplant and corn on the cob will benefit from a 30-minute soak in cold water prior to going on the grill.
- If vegetable kebabs are your grilling choice, and you’re using wooden skewers, be sure to soak them in water to prevent smoldering or flaming once they reach the grill.
- For small vegetables that will fall through the grate, either use a hinged grill pan or cook them wrapped in foil.

Once you have a bit of experience under your belt, knowing the specific handling each kind of vegetable requires will become very easy. Read my veggie grilling guide:

http://www.commissaries.com/kays_kitchen/healthy_cooking/tips/veggie_grilling_guide.cfm if you’re trying this for the first time; it covers the subject from A to Z – in vegetable terms that’s asparagus to zucchini. It’s a good one to print and save in your recipe box for future reference.

Grilling vegetables is so simple, you really don’t need to follow a specific recipe, but I’ve included a few anyway, just to get you started. They are all exceptionally good. So, get grilling, and enjoy. Remember, you can find the ingredients for all these recipes at your local commissary at significant savings. Till next time – I’ll see you at the commissary!

To check out these recipes and more, come to Kay’s Kitchen at <http://www.commissaries.com>.

Grilled Portobello Mushrooms

Ingredients:

- 4 portobello mushrooms
- 1/3 cup vegetable oil
- 1/4 cup chopped onion
- 5 cloves garlic, minced

1/3 cup balsamic vinegar

Directions:

1. Clean mushrooms and remove stems, reserve for other use. Place caps on a plate with gills up.
2. In a small bowl, combine the oil, onion, garlic and vinegar. Pour mixture evenly over the mushroom caps and let stand for 1 hour.
3. Grill mushrooms over hot coals for about 5 minutes per side, brushing with additional marinade, if desired. Serve immediately.

Note: *Serve on a bun, as you would a hamburger with all the trimmings, slice and use as a side dish or over lettuce leaves as a salad, or serve whole as a vegetarian alternative to steak.*

Marinated Grilled Vegetables

Ingredients:

- 1 medium eggplant
- 2-3 small zucchini or summer squash
- 1 each red and green bell pepper, seeds and ribs removed
- 1 medium onion
- 10-20 mushrooms, stems removed
- 1/4 cup olive oil
- 1 tablespoon lemon juice
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 teaspoon dried oregano

Directions:

1. Mix olive oil, lemon juice, garlic and oregano together, and set aside.
2. Slice eggplant into 1/2-inch thick rounds. Cut squash in half lengthwise or into 1/2-inch rounds. Cut peppers into squares or wide strips. Cut onions into wedges.
3. Toss vegetables with oil mixture until evenly coated. Cover and marinate in refrigerator for at least 1 hour.
4. Preheat grill. Place everything on the grate and cook 10-20 minutes, brushing remaining oil mixture over the vegetables every few minutes. Remove vegetables from grill as they become done.

Note: *Vegetables may be threaded onto skewers before grilling, if desired, rather than grilled on the grate. Serve vegetables hot from the grill, at room temperature, or cold, as leftovers.*

Ruthie's Layer Salad

Ingredients:

- 1 1/2 to 2 cups celery, finely diced
- 5 hardboiled eggs (cut in slices)
- 8 slices ham (cut in squares)

- 1 can of corn (drained)
- 2 large apples (cut in thin slices)
- 1 large jar of mayonnaise or salad dressing
- 1 large leek (white part only, cut in thin rings)

Directions:

- 1. Layer ingredients in a large bowl, in the same sequence as written
- 2. Chill several hours or overnight before serving

Fennel Salsa

Ingredients:

- 3 cups finely diced fresh fennel bulbs (about 2 small)
- 1 cup diced seeded tomatoes
- 1/8 cup chopped brine-cured black olives
- 1/4 cup chopped fresh basil
- 3 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil
- 2 tablespoons capers, drained and chopped
- 1 tablespoon balsamic vinegar

Directions:

- 1. Combine all ingredients in large bowl; toss to blend.
- 2. Season to taste with salt and pepper.
- 3. Cover and refrigerate at least 2 hours or up to 24 hours, tossing occasionally.

-DeCA-

About DeCA: *The Defense Commissary Agency operates a worldwide chain of commissaries providing groceries to military personnel, retirees and their families in a safe and secure shopping environment. Authorized patrons purchase items at cost plus a 5-percent surcharge, which covers the costs of building new commissaries and modernizing existing ones. Shoppers save an average of more than 30 percent on their purchases compared to commercial prices – savings amounting to thousands of dollars annually. For current savings figures for various groups – single member up to a family of seven – visit <http://www.commissaries.com>. A core military family support element, and a valued part of military pay and benefits, commissaries contribute to family readiness, enhance the quality of life for America’s military and their families, and help recruit and retain the best and brightest men and women to serve their country.*