

Broccoli Parmesan Bake



Unlike a certain former American president, I happen to enjoy broccoli. In fact, I LOVE broccoli! I don't recall being as enthusiastic about broccoli when I was kid however. Perhaps it's more of an acquired taste.

The health benefits of broccoli are constantly being trumpeted and in fact, it's been dubbed "The Miracle Food" and deservedly so. Broccoli contains vitamin C, vitamin A, folic acid, and calcium. For vegetarian eaters or folks who don't consume dairy products, broccoli is a good place to start when looking for alternative sources of calcium. And as you can probably tell, the fibrous stalks of the broccoli plant are a good source of fiber, which becomes even more important when eating low carb.

The other great thing about broccoli is that there are so many different ways to prepare it.

Probably the most common encounter that most people have with broccoli is at the bottom of a Chinese food carryout carton, but there are an almost unlimited number of ways to prepare broccoli, both as a side dish as well as part of a main course. One of my key strategies when meal planning, is to find appetizing substitutes for traditional starchy side dishes. I used to go straight for the sides that I loved so much such as all kinds of potatoes, pasta, and rice. Unfortunately, these kinds of carbs didn't love me back in terms of what they did to my waistline and digestive health.

Nowadays, I look to substitute the starchy side dishes of old with tasty vegetable dishes. In prior times, I would typically have both a starchy and veggie side dish, but now I only have

a larger portion of the vegetable side dish.

The broccoli side dish below is an old family favorite with an Italian accent and is extremely quick and easy to prepare. Unlike some broccoli preparations that produce an undercooked vegetable, this one is very tender without being turned to mush. It can be served with just about any main course and is right at home soaking up most any kind of sauce such as the Marsala sauce in the lead photo above. On a side note, you can substitute cauliflower just as easily for the broccoli using the same directions below (I used to hate cauliflower until I started preparing it this way).

Ingredients:

- 4 long stalks of broccoli with leaves and bottoms peeled off
- 1/4 c grated Parmesan cheese
- 2 tbsp extra virgin olive oil

Directions:

1. Bring a sauce pan 1/3 of the way filled with water to a boil
2. First dip the heads of the broccoli into the boiling water to quickly blanch. Rotate to get the entire head dark green and then place into the water.
3. Let simmer for 5 minutes, then drain into a colander. Make sure to drain well.
4. Preheat oven to 375F
5. Add 1 tbsp of evoo to a 9×9 glass baking dish. Add broccoli and toss to evenly coat the stalks with oil.



6. Use a metal soup spoon to evenly coat each stalk with

Parmesan cheese. Add more if needed making sure that heads are fully coated.

7. Bake for 10-15 minutes until cheese has browned as shown in the photos.



Servings: 2 (Tip: be sure to scrape up all the browned Parmesan crumbs from the baking dish – yum!)