



Growing with MO

Harvest of the Season

A Missouri Farm to Preschool Newsletter

May

Broccoli



Growing Broccoli

This is a cool season vegetable that can be planted in March or April in Missouri, so locally grown broccoli will soon be ripe and ready to enjoy. Have you seen how broccoli grows? Each plant makes one main head in the center. This head is cut when it is 3-6 inches wide and the buds are closed and tight. If the stem is cut close to the broccoli head, the plant will keep growing smaller heads called side shoots until the weather gets too hot. Sometime in June, it usually gets too hot for broccoli heads to keep their nice shape. By then, it's time to pull up the plants from the garden and plant a summer vegetable in its place.

Did You Know?

Broccoli florets are actually clusters of flower buds. If the broccoli head keeps growing too long, the florets become little yellow flowers



Read Together



Monsters Don't Eat Broccoli by Barbara Jean Hicks

The Very Hungry Caterpillar by Eric Carle

Cook Together

Broccoli Cheese Bites

2 cups chopped soft cooked broccoli
¼ cup finely chopped onions
1 teaspoon minced garlic
1 cup panko bread crumbs
1 cup shredded cheddar or colby cheese
2 eggs, beaten
½ teaspoon salt
Cooking oil spray

1. Preheat oven to 400 degrees.
2. Place all ingredients (except cooking spray) in a bowl. Mix well to combine, mashing up the broccoli.
3. Form mixture into 1 ½ inch balls. Place on baking sheet and spray with cooking oil spray. Bake until browned, 25 to 30 minutes.

Makes 20 snack size balls.

Let kids help:

- Break broccoli head into smaller pieces before cooking
- Shape balls with clean hands
- Place balls on baking sheet



Shop Together

Broccoli is in season in June in Missouri, so it should cost less than it does at other times of the year. Look for it at your local farmers market. Have your child help you count how many farmers are selling broccoli, then pick the best deal. Choose heads with a tight cluster of closed flower buds that are green, purplish or bluish green. If you happen to find a little green hungry caterpillar in fresh picked broccoli, don't panic. Just pick it off.

You can keep broccoli in the refrigerator up to 5 days. Wash it in cold running water just before you use it.

Explore Broccoli

Children are more likely to try a food after they become familiar with it in different ways. Read the book *Monsters Don't Eat Broccoli*, where monsters prefer to eat things like tractors, rocket ships and trees. Then make these broccoli tree snacks.



Use pretzel sticks for the trunk and branches. Break broccoli into different size pieces for the leaves. Plant the tree in a bed of hummus for dipping as your little monsters gobble up their trees.

From the Field

Stories from Missouri Child Care

At Young Professors Daycare in Raymore, they are committed to reducing processed food and serving more fresh fruits and vegetables to their preschoolers. The results are positive. Director Paula Smith observed a group of boys one day finishing lunch. Most of the boys were done and ready to go out and play, but one youngster said "No, wait for me. I want to finish my food!" He was eagerly eating the last of his broccoli and ranch dip.



Tips for Using Broccoli

- Broccoli is great in salads, but raw broccoli might be hard for little ones to chew. Try blanching it: Boil or steam broccoli for 1-2 minutes, then plunge it into ice water to chill quickly and drain. It will be bright green and firm, but tender.
- Steamed or boiled broccoli is fully cooked in about 8 minutes. Cooking it too long can lead to a mushy texture, strong odor and unpleasant taste.

Growing with MO Harvest of the Season is a project of the Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services Team Nutrition Program. Young children learn about Missouri grown fruits and vegetables through preschool classroom experiences, gardening, field trips and through eating these foods in meals and snacks when they are in season.



This project has been funded at least in part with Federal funds from the U.S. Department of Agriculture. The contents of this publication do not necessarily reflect the view or policies of the U.S. Department of Agriculture, nor does mention of trade names, commercial products, or organizations imply endorsement by the U.S. Government.

USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer.