

Enjoying Grilled Fruits and Vegetables

Don't forget to add some fruits and vegetables to your grill the next time you grill your meat. Fruits and vegetables add color, texture, flavor and nutrition without adding many calories.

Most people short change themselves on fruits and vegetables. Eating more can lower your risk for cancer and heart disease.

Fruits and vegetables also add fiber to your diet, a lacking component for many adults and children. Most women need about 20 grams of fiber each day, while men need about 30 grams per day.

The usual recommendation for children is their age plus five. A 7 year old, therefore, would need 12 grams of fiber per day.

Try these ideas to add flavor, color and fiber to your menu with grilled fruit and vegetables. These suggestions come from North Dakota State University Extension Specialists and www.fruitsandveggiesmorematters.org:

- Sprinkle wedges of apple or pear with cinnamon and a touch of brown sugar. Grill for about five minutes per side.
- Brush peeled whole bananas with canola or sunflower oil and add to the grill just until the fruit turns golden and has grill marks, or about five minutes per side.
- For a fun alternative to the summer classic s'mores, cut a ¼ inch deep slit down the length of an unpeeled banana. Pry the slit open and stuff with 2 tablespoons of chopped dark chocolate or your favorite candy bar. Wrap the banana in foil and grill for about five minutes on each side.
- Grill peaches and nectarines for a side dish to go with a steak or pork tenderloin. After cooking, the fruit can be diced and made into a salsa or relish by adding fresh herbs, chili peppers and lime juice or vinegar.

Add some vegetables to your grilling menu with these tips:

- Cut vegetables into large, flat pieces of even thickness throughout each slice. You can cut them into smaller pieces after cooking.
- Prepare bell peppers by cutting off the top and bottom of the pepper. Remove the core and then cut the pepper in half from top to bottom.
- Add flavor to vegetables with olive oil or any other type of oil and seasonings. Lay them in a single layer on a cookie sheet, brush with oil and season. Turn them over and repeat on the other side.
- Use marinades to add flavor. Be aware that sugar-based marinades cause the exterior of the vegetables to blacken.
- Use both moist and dry heat to cook your vegetables. Grill the vegetables until they have nice grilling marks on both sides. Remove them from the grill and place into a bowl or pot. Cover tightly with plastic wrap to prevent the steam from escaping for five to 10 minutes. This will finish the cooking process of the vegetables without drying them out.

Fresh Grilled Vegetables

2 tablespoons canola oil

2 cloves garlic, finely chopped

3 sweet potatoes cut into 1-inch slices

3 cobs of corn cut into 2 sections

1 eggplant cut into ½ inch slices

12 green onions, trimmed

Mix oil and garlic in a large bowl. Add vegetables and toss. Place vegetables in a vegetable basket made for the grill or a perforated vegetable grilling pan. Cook 10 minutes, turning twice, until vegetables are tender. Place vegetables on a platter and serve.

Makes 6 servings. Each serving has 190 calories, 34 grams of carbohydrates, 6 grams of fat and 8 grams of fiber.