VEGGIES
Eat them because you want to, not because you have to.

Your guide to making vegetables taste seriously good.

Brought to you by The Pilates Nutritionist!

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We all know we need to eat more vegetables.

Every nutritionist spouts the benefits, so I’m not going to bog you down with more.

Let’s focus our energy on making vegetables appear on the dinner table more often, shall we?

**Excuses, Excuses…**

1. They take too long. I don’t have time.
2. They’re expensive.
3. They don’t taste good.

Actually, these are all quite reasonable excuses. So let’s tackle them one by one.

1. **We’re all too busy to do everything.** Life gets in the way of everything if we let it. We all have the same 24 hours in a day, so if you don’t set aside time for eating healthy, it won’t happen. It’s a choice. Yes, cooking from scratch takes more time than opening up a can. Right now, chopping vegetables might be time consuming, but the more you do it, the less time it takes.

2. **When you shop in season** and particularly at farmer’s markets, you can find much lower prices. Buy tomatoes in the Summer, buy butternut squash in the Fall, buy kale and beets in the Winter, buy fresh lettuce and snow peas in the Spring. I’ve lived all over the country in areas with both temperate climates and extreme winters. Sometimes you have to settle for frozen spinach or canned tomatoes, and that’s ok. Embrace what’s available locally. Know that no matter what, eating vegetables now will save you a lot more money in health care costs.

3. **I used to think vegetables tasted terrible** until I learned how to cook them (but before that, the “bad taste excuse” was my favorite). If you’ve had a bad experience with a certain vegetable (boiled-to-death Brussels sprouts, I’m lookin’ at you!), keep an open mind. Preparation is everything when it comes to produce.

When you know how to make vegetables taste good, you’ll never push them off to the side of your plate again.
Time-saving Tips for Vegetables

#1 Wash your produce immediately

The biggest excuse for not cooking vegetables is that it takes too long to wash and chop (and takes up a lot of valuable counter top real estate). If you wash your veggies ahead of time, they are ready to go when you are.

Keep in mind this only works for veggies that you store in the fridge, such as greens, broccoli, celery, carrots, zucchini, and green beans. Don’t go washing onions, garlic, or potatoes and please don’t store them in the fridge!

Sometimes I’ll chop vegetables in advance, but usually I wait until the day-of to preserve maximum nutrients. Know that it’s better to have pre-chopped and actually eat them, than to skip out on eating produce all together.

#2 Cook in large batches

Who really wants to eat a salad e-v-e-r-y day? If you get sick of salads, having cooked vegetables ready to go is a life saver, especially if you have a wacky schedule (like me!).

If dinner is a stressful and rushed event in your home, consider roasting a big pan of vegetables at the start of the week. That way they’re ready in minutes. Just reheat in the oven (10-15 minutes at 350) and serve. You’ll notice quite a few of the recipes in this book are roasted.

Roasting or pre-cooking doesn’t work with everything (like greens), but does wonders with sweet potatoes, broccoli, cauliflower, onions, carrots, cabbage (really!), fennel, bell peppers, celery, beets... etc. Root vegetables love to be roasted.

Ok, now that you’ve found the time to fit vegetables into your schedule, let’s make ‘em taste good!
How To Make Vegetables Taste Good

Cooking Method

Never boil another vegetable in your life. Same can be said for steaming. These suck the flavor out of vegetables. I don’t care how healthy steamed vegetables are. They are bland and soggy; misery on a plate. No thanks.

- **Stir-fry on high heat** - This gives you the necessary browning that provides instant flavor. Start with a hot pan, a bit of oil (coconut oil or ghee are heat-stable fats), add your vegetables and stir often. When your veggies are a bit brown or if the pan dries out, add a splash of water and immediately put on the lid. Your vegetables are done when they are easily pierced with a fork, but most certainly NOT mushy. This takes between 2-8 minutes for most vegetables. Be sure to start with a hot pan! If you need to, reduce the heat later in the cooking process, but do start with a HOT pan.

- **Roast** - Roasting concentrates the flavors in the vegetables. Plus, once it’s in the oven, it takes very little hands-on time in the kitchen. Easy peasy.

- **Marinate** - Just like meat, marinating vegetables helps them soak up flavor before you cook. It’s also great for raw vegetable salads, like the recipes featured in this ebook for fennel and beets.
Amp up the flavor!

• Cut vegetables into even-sized pieces, so they all cook at the same rate and absorb salt/spices. Smaller pieces absorb more flavor. Hint, hint.

• Season vegetables before or during cooking, not after, so the flavor gets into them rather than just sitting on top.
  • Use enough salt! The magic ratio is 1 teaspoon per pound of vegetables. Salt is especially important for making bitter vegetables palatable. My biggest complaint when eating vegetables away from home is lack of salt. Seriously. We over-salt so much food and then leave vegetables completely naked and overcooked. No wonder people *think* they hate veggies. And one last tip about salt - add it during cooking, rather than after, otherwise the salt granules just sit on top of the food and taste salty instead of enhancing the natural flavor of the vegetables.
  • Be heavy handed with herbs if you want more flavor. Go for 1-2 teaspoons of dried herbs per pound of vegetables, such as thyme, oregano, basil, parsley, or rosemary.

• Add fat! You won’t eat vegetables if they taste bad (I certainly won’t). Please cook them in some fat such as real butter, coconut oil, or olive oil. The nutrients in vegetables are absorbed better when you eat them with fat and not shockingly, they taste a heck of a lot better, too.

For more on why you should feel good about buttering up your vegetables and oiling up your salads, read this post:
pilatesnutritionist.com/5-reasons-to-ditch-low-fat-salad-dressing/
Arugula Pesto (raw)

I love sauces. I love spreads. I love anything that is packed with flavor and when smothered on anything else, makes it 100x better.

Enter my dear friend: Pesto.

The pesto that most are familiar with is made with basil, but you can make pesto with whatever green suits your fancy (even kale!). I bought some baby arugula this week and when the weather got cooler and I wasn't in the mood for salads anymore, pesto came to my rescue!

Oh, and for those of you who "hate" greens, pesto is a fabulous way to incorporate them into your diet, especially because the greens are RAW and therefore remain bursting with vitamins and enzymes (read: happy body, clear skin, good digestion).

Ingredients

- 4+ cups arugula, packed (5-6 ounces, or one typical bag from Earthbound Farms)
- 1-2 garlic cloves, peeled
- ¼ cup pine nuts or walnuts (or 50/50 mix of the two)
- ¼ cup raw, grated Parmesan cheese (TJ’s sells a great one)
- ¼ cup extra virgin olive oil
- squeeze of lemon juice
- pinch of salt

Directions

1. In the bowl of a food processor, pulse greens, garlic cloves, nuts, and Parmesan. (I had to process the greens in stages, because all 4 cups wouldn’t fit at first. It will depend on your food processor.)
2. With the food processor running, slowly pour olive oil through the feed tube. Add lemon juice and salt to taste. Process to combine.
3. Transfer to a glass container, like a mason jar. If there is air space in the jar, press a piece of wax paper to the top of the pesto to prevent oxidation (aka browning).
4. Store in the refrigerator for up to 2 days or freeze in ice cube trays for later use.
Asian Beet Slaw (raw)

This recipe is incredibly simple and surprisingly flavorful, even with a short list of ingredients. It was born while on my journey to overcome food sensitivities when I was following an elimination diet and had limited ingredients to choose from.

If you’ve got ‘em, garnish this with sesame seeds as well. If you can get your hands on multi-colored or golden beets, by all means, use those!

The prettier your food is, the better it tastes.

Or, that’s how I see it anyways.

Ingredients

• 2 medium beets (tennis ball size), peeled
• 1-2 Tbsp toasted sesame oil
• Juice of 1-2 lemons (or limes)
• ¼ teaspoon salt (or to taste)
• 1 scallion, thinly sliced (save some for garnish)

Directions

1. Shred beets in a food processor with the grating attachment OR use a coarse grater (like you’d use for cheese). Just beware this is a messy job when done by hand.
2. In a large bowl mix shredded beets with remaining ingredients and let marinate for 30 minutes (it gets better overnight!).
3. Garnish with some additional sliced scallions. Serve and enjoy.

Asian beet slaw is a colorful addition to salads, tacos, or lettuce wraps. I’ve also served it alongside Tri-tip steak and grilled chicken.

It’ll keep in the fridge for about a week.
Lemon-Garlic Roasted Broccoli

I wasn’t always a broccoli fan, but there’s something magical about the combination of garlic and lemon juice.

If they are in season, use Meyer lemons. They are sweeter and juicier than regular lemons. Whatever you do, don’t buy bottled lemon juice. Just leave it out if you can’t find fresh or use a splash of apple cider vinegar instead.

Ingredients

- 1 lb broccoli
- 1 tsp salt
- 1 lemon
- 1-3 large cloves garlic, minced (depends how garlicky you want it!)
- 1 small onion, sliced thin
- 2 Tbsp olive oil, coconut oil, or ghee (clarified butter)

Directions

1. Cut up broccoli into individual florets. Try to cut them into even-sized pieces.
2. On a large sheet pan, toss broccoli with salt, juice of 1/2 the lemon (save the other half), garlic, onion, and oil.
3. Roast at 425 degrees for 25-35 minutes, or until broccoli is tender when pierced with a fork.
4. Squeeze the juice of the remaining lemon half over the top and serve.

Great when hot or cold. I often pack leftovers with my lunch the next day. It gets better overnight.
Roasted Brussels Sprouts

(Not your mom’s sprouts. I promise.)

I know, I know, you hated them as a kid. Your mother forced you to eat the mushy, boiled, stinky, overcooked puke-green orbs. BUT, when prepared right (no offense, Mom), Brussels are delicious!

Nothing tops roasted Brussels sprouts. They are simple to prepare and have a fantastic caramelized flavor. Here’s how I eat ’em.

Ingredients

- 1 stalk of Brussels sprouts (about 2 feet long) or 2-3 pounds of loose Brussels
- 1 onion, sliced
- a few Tablespoons extra virgin olive oil (or a combo of olive oil and coconut oil)
- 1-2 teaspoons sea salt
- ½ teaspoon black pepper
- 2 teaspoons dried thyme
- 1 teaspoon garlic powder

Directions

1. Rip Brussels sprouts off the stalk. Trim off ends and peel away discolored leaves, if any. Cut each sprout in half lengthwise (if the sprout is tiny, just leave it whole)
2. Put Brussels sprouts on a large baking sheet. Add oil and seasonings, stirring to coat. Spread out in one single layer. Tip: if they are cut side down, they caramelize better!
3. Roast at 400 degrees for 25-35 minutes, or until soft when pierced with a fork and slightly browned.

Fun fact about Brussels sprouts?
Brussels sprouts are named after the capital of Belgium, near which they supposedly originated. (This is why Brussels is capitalized and appears to be plural. A single sprout is a Brussels sprout NOT a Brussel sprout. I admittedly made that mistake for a while. Oops.)
Roasted Butternut Squash with Lime & Chili

I first made this for a Thanksgiving meal. I had a butternut squash waiting to be used and I didn't want to serve the usual squash with butter and maple syrup (bo-ring). I was craving something with a little kick and I happened to have some limes on hand. This is the result.

Much to my surprise, this dish was more popular than the stuffing and is a frequently requested side dish.

Ingredients
• 1 large butternut squash (about 2-3 lbs)
• 1-1½ tsp salt
• ½ tsp black pepper
• 4 Tbsp ghee (clarified butter) or coconut oil
• 1-2 limes
• 1 Tbsp honey (optional)
• 2 tsp mild chili powder

Optional
• ¼ cup fresh thyme leaves (remove leaves from stem, roughly chop)

Directions
1. Cut butternut squash in half lengthwise. Scoop out seeds (you can save 'em and roast like pumpkin seeds!). Peel squash.
2. Cut squash into 1 inch cubes and place on a baking sheet, ideally in a single layer.
3. Toss with remaining ingredients.
4. Roast at 425 degrees for 30-40 minutes, or until squash is tender and lightly browned. While roasting, turn the squash a few times to be sure it cooks evenly.
5. Taste and adjust seasonings.
Roasted Curried Cauliflower

This might take the cake for the most flavorful recipe in this book. Make this tonight and thank me later.

Ingredients

• 1 large head cauliflower, about 2 lbs, cut into small florets, roughly the same size
• 1 onion, sliced, any kind
• 1-2 inch knob fresh ginger, finely grated OR 1 teaspoon ground dried ginger
• 2-3 heaping Tbsp curry powder (yes, 2-3 tablespoons. If you don’t like spicy, buy a mild curry powder. A mere sprinkle may add some color, but we’re looking for flavor. Big time.)
• 2 cloves garlic, minced OR 1 teaspoon garlic powder
• 2 teaspoons salt, or more (use approximately 1 teaspoon per pound of vegetables)
• ½ teaspoon freshly ground pepper
• 16 oz can coconut milk (Absolutely no reduced-fat nonsense. Remember you absorb many nutrients better with fat. Oh, and your vegetables will taste so good that you’ll actually them without crying about it.)
• 1-2 Tbsp coconut oil or ghee or butter (ghee is Indian clarified butter)
• 1 Tbsp balsamic vinegar or pomegranate molasses (sounds weird, but the flavor is drab without it. Pomegranate molasses is found in Middle Eastern markets.)

Directions

1. Cut up all vegetables and place in a large baking pan, such as a lasagne dish. You want a single layer, so if it’s piled up, split it into 2 pans. The smaller the pieces, the faster it will cook.
2. Add all spices. Pour in coconut milk, oil/ghee, and vinegar/pomegranate molasses. Mix.
3. Bake in preheated 425 degree oven for 30-40 min or until cauliflower is lightly browned and tender when pierced with a fork. Serve hot.
Shaved Fennel Salad with Honey-Lime Dressing (raw)

If you haven’t tried fennel, you are missing out.

I used to avoid using this vegetable because I assumed it had a strong licorice taste, a flavor that I don’t care for.

Much to my surprise (and after some convincing from reading other food blogs), I discovered that the fennel bulb has only the subtlest hint of licorice. Most of the licorice or anise-like flavor is captured in the leaves and seeds.

How many vegetables do you assume you hate without ever trying ‘em?

This salad is crunchy and aromatic and pairs well with chicken, pork, or fish.

Ingredients

- 1 large fennel bulb (reserve a few green leaves for garnish)
- ¼ cup lime juice (from 2-3 limes, depending on size)
- 1 teaspoon honey (more or less to taste. I use a really tasty raw honey I snagged at a little shop in Bishop while driving from LA to Mammoth)
- splash of extra virgin olive oil
- ½ tsp salt
- pinch of black pepper

Directions

1. Using a mandolin set on the thinnest setting, shave fennel bulb. Alternatively, use a sharp knife and cut into paper-thin slices. (You can save the stems in your freezer for making chicken or beef stock.)
2. Mix lime juice, honey, olive oil, salt and pepper in a large bowl. Taste and adjust seasonings as desired. Toss in fennel.
3. Marinate for 30+ minutes. (Hint: The longer it sits, the better it gets!) 
4. Garnish with a few tender green leaves from the fennel tops if desired.
Savory Sautéed Kale

My first attempt at cooking kale was nothing short of a disaster. I must have been about 15 years old. I could barely choke it down - bitter, mushy.

Thankfully I didn’t give up on kale. I discovered there are many varieties that have different flavors and textures. I also realized that most people overcook kale and ruin it.

The least bitter of all kale varieties is Lacinato kale, aka black kale, Italian kale, Tuscan kale or dinosaur kale. It is tastiest in Spring and Fall when the weather is cooler. Hot temps make greens taste more bitter, so don’t say I didn’t warn you. Whatever season you buy it, you’ll need to know how to prepare it to really make it crave-able.

Ingredients

- 1 bunch Lacinato kale
- ½ teaspoon salt + pinch of freshly ground black pepper
- 1 small onion
- 1 Tbsp butter
- Juice of ½ a lemon

Directions

1. Wash kale thoroughly. Remove stem by holding the end of the stem with one hand and using the other to pull off the greens (or use a knife). You can either chop the stem finely, and sauté with the onion or discard.
2. Cut kale leaves into strips.
3. Dice onion.
4. In a hot cast iron skillet, sauté onion (and if you’re using them, kale stems) in butter until soft and lightly brown. Add half the salt.
5. Keep the heat on medium-high. Add kale leaves, remaining salt, and ~1 Tbsp water. Immediately put on the lid, allowing the kale to steam for 1 minute.
6. Stir, so the kale cooks evenly. It’s ready when the kale is wilted and soft, but not mushy. Taste test if you’re not sure. It should take only 1-2 minutes.
7. Add a squeeze of fresh lemon juice and adjust seasonings if needed.
Pan-fried Crispy Mushrooms

I was lucky enough to have a mom that knew how to make mushrooms taste good. Oddly enough, my mom learned this skill from her high school biology teacher.

During the fungus chapter, he wanted to show kids that mushrooms were delicious. He claimed they could taste as good as potato chips and brought in the following recipe to prove his point. And it worked!

Most people think mushrooms are rubbery and flavorless, but not when you cook them like this.

Ingredients
- 2 cups crimini or portabello mushrooms, sliced very thin (like 1-2 mm thick)
- pinch of salt + pepper
- 2 Tbsp (or more) butter or ghee

Directions
1. Heat a large cast iron skillet. On medium heat, melt butter and add mushrooms in a single layer. If you crowd the pan, they are rubbery and awful. If the heat’s too low, they steam. Take your time and cook in batches if you need to.
2. Use tongs or a fork to flip them over one at a time to brown evenly. Season with salt and pepper.
3. Once browned on both sides, remove from pan and serve immediately.

These are great atop salads, cooked vegetables or meats, or eaten alone as a snack (seriously).

NOTE: Don’t wash mushrooms with water, otherwise they’ll steam in the pan. Instead use a paper towel to dust off any mulch.
Bacon Onions

If you haven’t already figured it out, I’m an omnivore, so I do eat animal foods. And since I’m also human, I love bacon.

In our house, we cook bacon in batches in the oven. But once you’re done, you have this dirty pan with caramelized bacon bits and bacon fat to deal with.

Bacon onions are partly the result of my laziness (not wanting to clean the pan) and genius (bacon makes everything taste good).

Now every time I make a batch of bacon, I make a batch of bacon onions.

Bacon onions are pure umami - that indescribable savory meaty flavor that makes everything taste better. They are like MSG without the MSG, like adding good crack to any recipe.

Add them to the pan before making eggs, stir into a soup, or mix into a batch of meatloaf. You can even use them to make onion dip - simply stir them into a tub of sour cream in place of a sketchy onion dip flavor packet.

Ingredients

- 2 large onions, sliced thin (brown, white or purple onions work)
- ½ tsp salt
- Sheet pan leftover from a batch of bacon

Directions

1. Spread onions out on a sheet pan in a single layer. Sprinkle with salt. Roast at 325 degrees for 25-35 minutes, flipping once during cooking.
2. Bacon onions are done when they are soft, translucent, and lightly brown. The longer they cook, the more caramelized flavor they develop.

NOTE: Watch these carefully! They go from underdone to burnt pretty quickly, hence the lower oven temperature compared to my other roasted vegetable recipes. Store in an airtight glass container in the fridge and use within 1-2 weeks.
Who is The Pilates Nutritionist?

Why that’s me, Lily Nichols!

Yes, the girl holding vegetables just bursting with excitement (farmers’ markets are my Disneyland).

I help women frustrated with restrictive diets find the Pilates body they’ve been working for by giving up low fat, low calorie diets that never work (and taste terrible) and indulging in real, delicious food.

And if you have digestive issues that doctors can’t figure out, I can help you discover what foods are triggering your symptoms and get you relief fast through a customized diet based on the results of food sensitivity testing.

I also specialize in prenatal nutrition, so I help expecting moms have healthy, happy babies by teaching them the best foods and exercises (including Pilates) for a successful, easy pregnancy. And if you’ve been diagnosed with gestational diabetes, I can help you learn to fearlessly manage your blood sugar through lifestyle changes, so you have a lower chance of needing medicine or insulin and so that your baby gets the best start possible.

As a registered dietitian/nutritionist, certified diabetes educator, and certified Pilates instructor, who has worked in hospitals, clinics, health food stores, state programs, Pilates studios and in private practice, I integrate my varied background to give you the best, simple to follow nutrition advice and help you fall in love with food again, one real food meal at a time.

Got a friend who’s a veggie hater? Send ‘em over to www.PilatesNutritionist.com to get their own copy of this ebook!