

Technique: Veggie Ice Plunge

How to briefly cook and then chill vegetables (aka blanch vegetables)

Use this method to immediately stop vegetables from cooking --to "kill the cook" --a term Rita learned from a Swiss chef she worked with years ago:

- Fill a large bowl with ice and water and sit it in the sink.
- Bring a pot of water to a boil; the size depends on the quantity of vegetables.
- When the vegetables are cooked to the point you want (1-3 minutes), remove them with a wire strainer and immediately plunge them into the bowl of ice-filled water.
- Let stand several minutes, adding more ice if needed, until vegetables are cold. Drain them well.
- Alternately, you can keep the vegetables in the pan, drain the water, and add ice to the pan. But it will take a longer to kill the cook because you are also cooling a very hot pan. The vegetables may not stop cooking as quickly as needed.

Here's Rita's method to 'kill the cook' when making a chilled vegetable salad: (recipe follows)

- Microwave the vegetables, covered, in a serving dish or serving bowl with just a tablespoon or two of water.
- While the veggies heat up, put plenty of ice in a colander.
- When cooked as desired, place the dish of veggies in the sink, add the ice and some water to the dish. Let sit 5 minutes or until the vegetables are cold.
- Drain, dress and serve. Or place in the fridge until ready to use.



Fresh Veggies Italian Style

Makes 4 to 6 servings.

Marinated fresh vegetables are a common dish at Italian dinner tables and a delicious way to eat your veggies. Serve with fresh Italian bread to sop up the dressing. Try asparagus or green beans in place of broccoli.

- 2 to 4 cups broccoli florets
- 1/2 cup extra virgin olive oil
- 1/4 cup Holland House White Wine Vinegar *
- 2 tablespoons chopped Italian parsley
- 2 tablespoons chopped basil
- 2 teaspoons packed brown sugar
- 1/2 teaspoon salt (or 1 tsp kosher salt)
- 1 small clove garlic, minced

To blanch broccoli in the microwave, use a wide microwave-safe dish or bowl. Add 2-3 tablespoons water to broccoli in dish. Cover and cook on high 2 to 3 minutes or until broccoli is tender-crisp. Timing depends on quantity of broccoli. Remove cover and immediately fill serving dish with ice. Add water to the top of the dish; set aside.

Combine remaining ingredients; whisk to dissolve sugar and salt. Drain broccoli into a colander; transfer back to serving dish. Drizzle with desired amount of dressing and stir to coat broccoli. Use all the dressing for 4 cups florets. Serve with sliced baguette or crusty Italian bread.

* If desired, substitute 3-4 tablespoons balsamic vinegar; do not use sugar.

