

The Curve

EAT PURPLE SPROUTING BROCCOLI!

After a fairly sparse couple of months on the leafy vegetable front, the start of the purple sprouting broccoli season marks a welcome addition to the winter vegetable palate. Simply steamed or boiled, it partners almost any fish or meat dish, and it also takes centre stage in excellent dishes such as Broccoli with Anchovy (see below).

HISTORY - Purple sprouting broccoli was initially cultivated by the Romans. Broccoli has been grown in the UK since the early 18th century, although the purple sprouting variety has only risen to prominence in the last 30 years.

BIOLOGY - Broccoli is a cruciferous plant, in the same family as the cabbage, and is closely related to the cauliflower.

NUTRITION - Cruciferous foods are now hailed as having a number of important health benefits. Purple sprouting broccoli contains the phytochemical sulphoraphane (thought to help prevent cancer) and may provide resistance against heart disease, osteoporosis and diabetes. It is packed with vitamin C and is a good source of caretenoids, iron, folic acid, calcium, fibre and vitamin A.

TIPS:

BUYING - Purple sprouting broccoli is especially good when young and tender. Look for darkly coloured specimens with crisp stalks, no bigger than 1cm in diameter, which snap cleanly when broken. Avoid bendy broccoli.

PREPARING - Split thicker stalks about halfway up so that they cook at the same time as the heads. Steam, stir-fry or boil in a small amount of water. The tasty leaves are edible and so do not need to be removed.

COOKING: Scan the code below to view and download the recipe for '*Linguine with Purple Sprouting Broccoli, Sesame & Chilli*'

