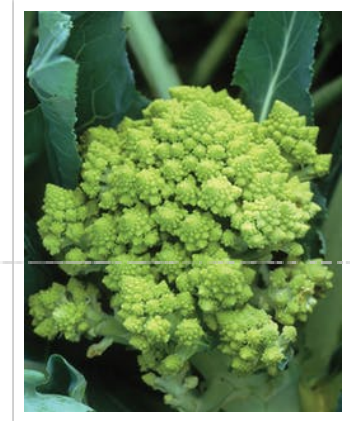


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# sarah's superfoods: broccoli

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*This article first appeared in Country Living in March 2015. To read the PDF copy of the feature as it appeared in the magazine, please [click here](#), or you can read the article in full below.*

Broccoli has long been regarded as a nutritious choice, but it has now joined the super league. Like all green vegetables, it is rich in fibre, full of iron and packed with vitamins A, B and C. However, recent research has found that the florets contain a compound called glucoraphanin, which is used in the plant's own defence system but also boosts our bodies' own antioxidant levels, creating a sort of 'antioxidant mop'. This is increasingly important as we get older and have a greater likelihood of imbalances in our body's chemistry, which in turn contribute to an increased risk of heart disease and some cancers.

But which variety is most beneficial? There's the big, puffy, tree-like, deep-green calabrese, available all year; there's purple sprouting broccoli, at its best in the next month or so; and its white, more tender cousin – rare to find in a greengrocer's, but easy to grow. But it's the new Beneforté broccoli, which looks like a small-headed calabrese, that is causing quite a stir in the world of nutrition.

With most broccoli varieties, you'll need to eat quite a lot to derive the benefits, but the newly, and traditionally, bred Beneforté (so-called Super Broccoli) contains more than twice the level of the good stuff we need to consume. From analysis of wild brassicas collected in Sicily, scientists found that these native forms have exceptionally high levels of glucoraphanin – a compound that activates the body's defences – many times greater than their longcultivated cousins. Beneforté is the result of 30 years of research and crossbreeding of cultivated broccolis with these wild-flower ancestors. This new form has such high levels of glucoraphanin that eating only two portions a week will help protect against disease.

To get the best out of it, don't boil it and discard the water, as that's where some of the goodness lies. Instead, roast, juice or steam it, with minimal water, using, rather than discarding, the water if you can.

Seeds and plants of Beneforté broccoli are yet to be made available, but hopefully we'll be able to grow our own within the next couple of years. For now, look for it in supermarkets and start planning menus to make

sure you get your fill. It's worth it – this vegetable really does do you good.

This article also includes [five broccoli recipes](#):

- Smoked Mackerel, Broccoli and Almond Salad
- Roasted Purple Sprouting Broccoli, Citrus and Sweet Potatoes with Anchovy Mayonnaise
- Ribollita
- Broccoli and Cauliflower Falafel Fritters with Sweet and Sour Tomato Sauce
- Broccoli, Apple and Ginger Juice with Lemon

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