



Summary

Vegetables are herbs grown in intensive cultivation for human consumption with high nutrition value, containing high amount of water, essential minerals, vitamins and specific food components, flavour and aromatic substances. Vegetables are mainly eaten for their contribution to the flavour and interest of food and for the supply of vitamins, micronutrients, fibre and other nutrients, including antioxidants essential for the human life. Some vegetables provide volatile, essential oils, which supply aroma and taste to stimulate the appetite, and, have health maintaining effects.

In everyday usage, a vegetable is any part of a plant that is consumed by humans as food as part of a meal. The term *vegetable* is **somewhat** arbitrary, and largely defined through culinary and cultural tradition. It normally excludes other food derived from plants such as fruits, nuts, and cereal grains, **but includes seeds such as pulses**. The original meaning of the word *vegetable*, still used in biology, was to describe all types of plant, as in the terms “vegetable kingdom” and “vegetable matter”. Originally, vegetables were collected from the wild by hunter-gatherers **and entered cultivation in several parts of the world, probably during the period 10,000 BC to 7,000 BC, when a new agricultural way of life developed. Depending on the type of vegetable concerned, harvesting the crop is followed by grading, storing, processing, and marketing. Vegetables can be eaten either raw or cooked and play an important role in human nutrition, being mostly low in fat and carbohydrates, but high in vitamins, minerals and dietary fiber**. Many nutritionists encourage people to consume plenty of fruit and vegetables, five or more portions a day often being recommended. The USDA Dietary Guidelines for Americans recommends consuming five to nine servings of fruit and vegetables daily. The total amount consumed will vary according to age and gender, and is determined based upon the standard portion sizes typically consumed, as well as general nutritional content. Vegetables are less acidic than fruits and for that reason are classified as ‘low acid’ products. A wide range of micro-organisms are able to grow in moist low-acid products, which may lead to spoilage and the possibility of food poisoning. To prevent this, vegetables can be processed by heating to destroy bacteria, or by pickling, salting, or drying to inhibit bacterial growth. Care is needed when processing low acid products, such as vegetables, to minimize the risk of transmitting food poisoning bacteria to consumers.