

### To your health

## Natural treatments for bowel diseases

BY DR. ZOLTAN P. RONA

The general term, "inflammatory bowel disease" includes two major gastrointestinal diseases, Crohn's disease and ulcerative colitis. Both involve large bowel inflammation and tissues outside the colon. There is some degree of overlap with respect to signs and symptoms in both conditions but the causes of both are poorly understood.

Crohn's disease is primarily a disease of white adults between the ages of 20 and 40 although it can occur in both children and the elderly. Its main signs and symptoms include abdominal pain, diarrhea, weight loss, rectal bleeding, anal fissures, abscesses and arthritis. In a minority of cases there may be inflammation of the liver, kidney and skin.

Ulcerative colitis is a chronic inflammatory disease that deteriorates the lining of the large bowel. It shows up primarily in the 20 to 40 age group and affects predominantly females. Most often, the inflammation begins at the rectum and extends up through the colon. The inflammation can progress until ulcerations and abscesses develop. In some patients, the disease can be mild and localized or excruciatingly painful with perforations of the colon. There is usually diarrhea with blood and mucus in the stool. Sudden attacks followed by periods of remission are typical.

#### Allergy theory

Ulcerative colitis tends to recur in families and there is a high incidence of eczema, hay fever, arthritis and ankylosing spondylitis.

There is a school of thought which believes that inflammatory bowel disease, especially ulcerative colitis, is the result of an allergy or hypersensitivity reaction to certain foods by the colon. Salicylate (e.g. Aspirin) sensitivity can be involved. Some researchers have shown the existence of circulating antibodies against cow's milk and other foods, especially gluten from wheat and other grains.

Conventional medical treatments for Crohn's and ulcerative colitis often ignore the value of diet despite a large amount of published literature that stresses its importance. Dietary therapies can be done concurrently with conventional treatments. Studies documented in the book *Breaking The Vicious Cycle. Intestinal Health Through Diet* (by Elaine Gottschall, Kirkton, Ont.: The Kirkton Press, 1994) indicate that many victims of inflammatory bowel disease can control their symptoms simply by eliminat-

## FOODsmarts MADELEINE GREY

Now's the time to sink your teeth into the sweetest, crunchiest and most satisfying broccoli of the year. You'll taste the difference when it's Ontario-grown and farm-fresh.

# Broccoli bliss

### Trivia

- The name broccoli comes from the Latin word "brachium" which means branch or arm.
- Broccoli wasn't widely grown in North America until the 1920s when Italians began immigrating to California.
- Broccoli is often called calabrese in Europe, named after the Italian province of Calabria where this variety was developed.

### Shopping know-how

- Look for firm, crisp plants with deep color.
- The more slender the stem, the better. Thick stems are fibrous and woody. Avoid butt ends that are dry, cracked or hollow.
- Fresh broccoli should have a sweet, mild smell, not one that is strong and cabbage-like.

### Storing

- Store broccoli in an open plastic bag or a sealed, perforated plastic bag.
- Broccoli stored too long converts its sugar into fibre. That's why winter broccoli is never as sweet as summer-fresh broccoli.

### Nutrient city

- Broccoli is often hailed as one of the healthiest foods you can eat. Here's why:
- It's an excellent source of vitamin C, a good source of beta carotene and folic acid, and a significant source of calcium.
- Broccoli is rich in such phytochemicals as bioflavonoids and indoles which help protect against cancer.
- Broccoli is low in calories: only 40 calories per cup, cooked.

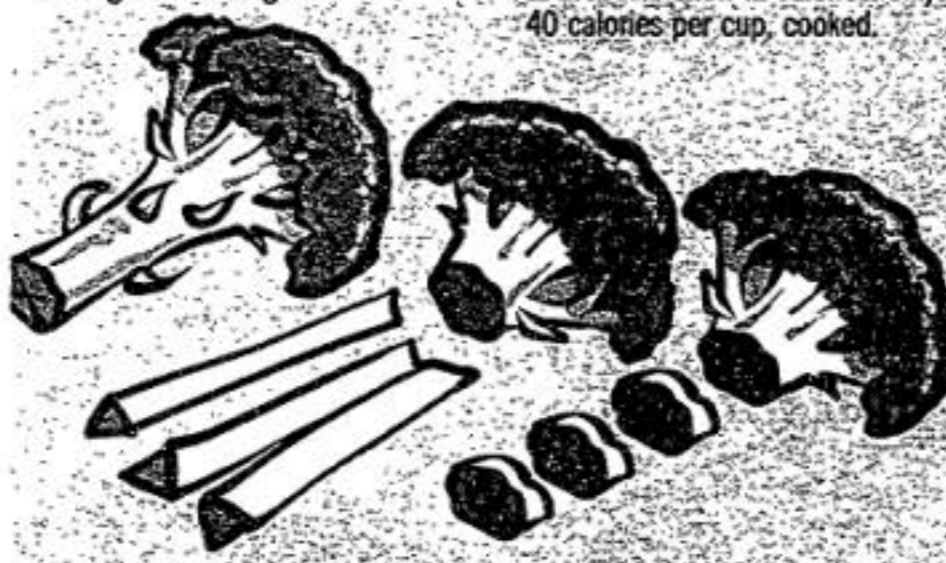
**Nutrition TIP OF THE WEEK**  
Broccoli is high in fibre (2.5 grams of fibre in one cup) and contains natural laxatives. In fact, this veggie helps prevent constipation.

### Frozen broccoli

- While the texture and taste is better in fresh versus frozen, don't ignore frozen broccoli, which offers convenience and comparable nutrient intakes.
- Frozen broccoli usually consists of florets, only. Florets are higher in beta carotene than the stalks, so you'll get more beta for your buck with frozen.
- Unfortunately, you'll also get more sodium when you buy frozen, twice as much as fresh.
- Frozen broccoli may contain more nutrients than an old head of broccoli that has languished in your fridge.

### Stem strategies

Many cooks cut off the florets and toss the stems in the garbage or compost. But peeling is all a stem needs to taste great. Serve raw with a dip, or brown bag them with carrot and celery sticks. When cooking with florets, peel and cut stems on the diagonal into coins and they'll cook in the same time as florets. If cooking broccoli florets with long stems attached, cut an "X" at the bottom of the peeled stem to help speed up its cooking time.



MADELEINE GREY IS A TORONTO FOOD WRITER

ILLUSTRATIONS BY CANDACE LOURDES FOR THE TORONTO STAR

# Discover vegetables from the East

BY KATE HARRIES

## Down to earth

The corn is as high as an elephant's eye at the Huron St. Community Gardens and the leaves of the taro plant are as large as its ear.

Which figures, because the taro is also known as elephant's ear plant. Other names are yu, or woo. You eat the tuberous roots that are starchy and cooked like a potato as well as the young leaves and shoots, but I'd grow it just for its elegant heart-shaped leaves.

The gardens behind the library at College and Huron Sts. at the north end of Chinatown were conceived by FoodShare co-ordinator Laura Berman as a demonstration garden for Chinese vegetables. The gardens demonstrate first of all that a vegetable garden is as beautiful as any formal planting, a charming addition to the attractive yellow-brick Lillian H. Smith branch.

As with other FoodShare projects throughout the city, it has fulfilled other goals — bringing the community together and fostering an exchange of knowledge and skills between generations and cultural groups.

A central circular bed is intersected by two wide grassy paths, and each quarter is divided again into five plots, each the domain of one gardener. There's a mix in the plots — from the familiar to the exotic, reflecting the gardeners' varying backgrounds.

Oriental horticultural tradition is reflected in the raised beds and low trellises, constructed from sticks, broom handles, rhubarb stalks, chair legs and whatever might happen to be handy. And a stroll through the plots reveals unfamiliar sights.

■ Bitter melon (ku gua or fu kwa) twines two metres up a dead branch pushed into the soil. It's a pretty annual vine with grape-shaped leaves. The fruits are still tiny but when they develop they'll have warty skins that turn orangy red when fully ripe. They can be stuffed, steamed or stir-fried. The bitter flavor can be attenuated by a preliminary blanching.

■ Hairy melon (mao gua or mo kwa) is a squash, and it's hairy all right. In the kitchen, it's treated like a courgette. The hairs of home-picked fruits disappear in cooking.

■ Amaranth (xian cai or yin choi) is a plant used in almost every culture, Berman notes. In South America, the seeds are ground into flour; in the Caribbean it's known as calaloo and cooked like spinach, which is also how the Chinese use it. In North America, "we call it pigweed and don't value it at all,"

she says. The Chinese amaranth is clearly the same family as the red-root pigweed that springs up in every Ontario garden, but more decorative with a red centre to the leaf that looks like coleus. Like so many Oriental vegetables, it can be harvested on the cut-and-come-again principle.

■ Chrysanthemum (tung hao or tung ho). Both the petals and the leaves are eaten, raw in salads or cooked as greens. The pungent flavor can be too strong for Western palates; the solution is to use very young leaves and shoots, and also to be careful not to overcook.

■ Mustard greens (jie cai or kaai tsoi) may be familiar to those who grow mesclun; some mixes, especially those formulated for mid-summer include mustard, which has a curly bright green leaf with a hot peppery flavor. Salads, soups, stirfries are all enhanced by mustard greens that are also a very popular pickling vegetable in the Far East.

■ Hyacinth bean (bian dou or pin tau), an attractive pole bean with purple flowers and purple beans, can be cooked by any methods suitable for French beans and are good in curries. The Chinese also dry the mature seeds which can be cooked and made into bean curd, like the soya bean.

■ Ornamental kale (hua cai or fa choy) enhances any garden with beautiful rosettes of purple, mauve, pink, yellow or red. The leaves may look too good to eat, but when fresh and young they make a decorative addition to a salad and are delicious shredded and quickly stir-fried.

Mandarin and Cantonese names for the vegetables, as well as much of the information above, come from *Oriental Vegetables* by British gardening writer Joyce Larkcom (John Murray, 1991), a comprehensive guide to their cultivation and use.

Seed companies are gradually increasing their listings of seed for Oriental vegetables, but the choice remains somewhat restricted.

The gardener who wants to expand into this area is probably best advised to sally forth into Chinatown next spring in search of seed and seedlings. Be open-minded and take a good reference book.

Kate Harries is a Simcoe County gardener. Send your gardening questions to Down to Earth, c/o People section, Toronto Star, One Yonge St., Toronto, M5E 1E6.

## Tests performed by the vet

BY DR. GARY ROSNICK

### Your pet matters

Whether it be a coughing dog, a jaundiced cat or an itchy pet that is losing its hair, veterinarians often rely on laboratory tests to aid them in making an accurate diagnosis and prognosis. Here's a sampling of some of the more common tests veterinarians perform:

**Fine needle biopsy/aspirate:** A needle is inserted into a tissue

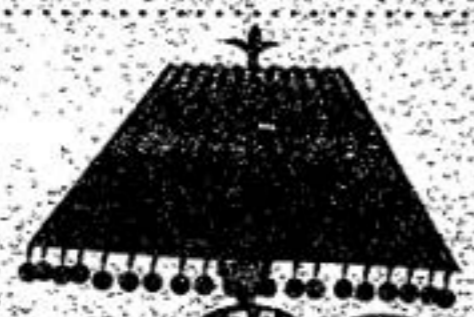
(an abnormal growth or lump, an organ such as the liver or kidney, a joint or a cavity such as the chest or abdomen) and fluid or cells are aspirated into a syringe. The material is then transferred to a glass slide,

stained and examined under a microscope, often by a specialist at a pathology lab. From the cells or fluid, the pathologist can often provide information as to whether the problem is an infection, inflammation or a benign or malignant tumor.

**Surgical biopsy:** If the fine needle biopsy indicates the possibility of cancer, a surgical biopsy is often performed. Here, an actual piece of tissue or the entire growth is removed to obtain a more definitive diagnosis, treatment plan and prognosis. Surgical biopsies are often used to diagnose many skin related problems as well.

**Urinalysis:** This is a valuable tool for screening diseases of the kidney, bladder and urethra. As well, an analysis of the urine can be very useful in screening for such problems as diabetes mellitus, certain liver

## Penny PINCHER BY SUSAN PENNELL-POLETIK



# Why did