

The Complete Guide to Vitamin C Rich Foods

Why It Matters, Top Food Sources, and How to Preserve It

Vitamin C supports collagen production for skin and joint health, strengthens immune function, acts as an antioxidant against cell damage, and significantly improves how well your body absorbs iron from plant foods. Unlike some vitamins, your body can't store or produce vitamin C, so it needs to be replenished daily through diet. This guide covers the top fruit and vegetable sources, how much you need, and how to avoid losing it during cooking and storage.

Colour Key

Fruits	Vegetables
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Top Vitamin C Fruits

Food	Vitamin C / 100g	Note
1. Amla (Indian Gooseberry)	~600 mg	One of the richest natural vitamin C sources of any food.
2. Guava	~228 mg	Contains more vitamin C than most citrus fruits, gram-for-gram.
3. Lychee	~72 mg	A seasonal fruit with a good vitamin C boost alongside natural sweetness.
4. Kiwi	~93 mg	More vitamin C than an orange, plus a good dose of vitamin K.
5. Papaya	~62 mg	Also contains papain, an enzyme that supports digestion.
6. Strawberries	~59 mg	Higher in vitamin C than most other berries.
7. Orange	~53 mg	The classic vitamin C source, best eaten whole for the fibre too.
8. Lemon	~53 mg	A small amount goes a long way when added to water, tea, or meals.
9. Pineapple	~48 mg	Also contains bromelain, an enzyme that supports digestion.
10. Mango	~36 mg	A good source alongside beta-carotene (vitamin A).

Top Vitamin C Vegetables

Food	Vitamin C / 100g	Note
1. Green Chilli	~143 mg	Surprisingly one of the richest vitamin C sources of any vegetable.
2. Bell Peppers (Red)	~128 mg	Contains more vitamin C than most citrus fruits, especially the red variety.

Food	Vitamin C / 100g	Note
3. Kale	~93 mg	A leafy green with one of the highest vitamin C contents among vegetables.
4. Broccoli	~89 mg	Best lightly steamed rather than boiled, to retain more vitamin C.
5. Brussels Sprouts	~85 mg	A good source, best not overcooked to preserve the vitamin C content.
6. Moringa (Drumstick) Leaves	~51 mg	Also rich in iron and calcium, a well-rounded traditional green.
7. Cauliflower	~48 mg	A milder-tasting vitamin C source that works well raw or lightly cooked.
8. Cabbage	~37 mg	Best eaten raw or lightly cooked, as heat reduces vitamin C content.
9. Coriander Leaves (Cilantro)	~27 mg	A small daily garnish that adds a meaningful vitamin C boost over time.
10. Spinach (Palak)	~28 mg	Contains vitamin C alongside iron; the two work together for better absorption.

■ How Much Vitamin C Do You Need?

- Most adults need roughly 65-90mg a day, easily covered by 1-2 servings of the foods above.
- Smokers generally need more (an additional ~35mg/day), as smoking increases vitamin C turnover in the body.
- Pregnant and breastfeeding women have somewhat higher requirements — check with a doctor for personalized targets.
- Vitamin C is water-soluble, so excess amounts are typically excreted rather than stored — consistent daily intake matters more than one large dose.

■ How to Preserve Vitamin C When Cooking & Storing

- Vitamin C breaks down with heat, so lightly steaming or quickly stir-frying preserves more than boiling.
- If boiling vegetables, use minimal water and consider using the leftover water in soups or gravies, since vitamin C leaches into it.
- Cut fruits and vegetables just before eating — vitamin C degrades with air exposure over time once cut.
- Store vitamin C-rich produce in a cool, dark place; prolonged light and heat exposure speeds up the breakdown.
- Eat some sources raw when possible (like bell peppers or amla) to get the full, unreduced vitamin C content.

Note: Vitamin C values are approximate averages and can vary by variety, ripeness, and growing conditions. This guide is for general education, not medical or dietary prescription — consult a doctor or dietitian for advice specific to your needs, especially if considering supplementation.