

Brassica oleracea var. *italica*

[Synonyms : *Brassica oleracea* var. *cauliflora*]

BROCCOLI (English, Italian, Swedish) is a biennial. It has green or purple flowers.

It is also known as Asparagus broccoli, *Brocoli* (French), *Brocoli asperge* (French), *Brokkoli* (German), Calabresse, Cape broccoli, *Chou brocoli* (French), Green sprouting broccoli, Heading broccoli, Italian broccoli, *Parsakaali* (Finnish), Purple cauliflower, *Sai lan fa* (Chinese), *Spargelkohl* (German), *Sparriskål* (Swedish), *Sprossenbrokkoli* (German), Sprouting broccoli, Winter broccoli, and Winter cauliflower.

Warning – broccoli can be poisonous for animals, if fed to them in large quantities over long periods.

Oleracea means ‘vegetable- or cooking herb-like or of the herb-, vegetable or kitchen garden’.). *Italica* means ‘of or from Italy’.

Its common name Broccoli is derived from the Italian for ‘cabbage sprout’ *broccolo*.

Apparently broccoli as it is known today has changed little from Roman times according to some authorities. Its origins are obscure and some authorities ponder on the possibility that the Romans or their neighbours the Etruscans (for whom many have declared a higher regard in many spheres including plant cultivation) may have developed broccoli from the cabbage (*Brassica oleracea* var. *capitata*). Certainly the Romans are said to have eaten a broccoli-like vegetable – one that it is said that Tiberius’ (42 BC-37 AD) son Drusus ate in such quantities that his father warned him against consuming the vegetable to excess.

The vegetable was not familiar in France until the 16th Century. It is believed to be one of the several plants introduced there by Catherine de Médicis (1519-1589). Although she married the future French king Henri II in 1533, it was not until 1560 however that the name *brocoli* (according to known records) was in use there. Meanwhile across the Channel broccoli was unknown in Britain until the 18th Century – roughly 1720.

Broccoli is a familiar vegetable not least when boiled as a hot dish or prepared for salad. It is not only eaten in the West where the fashion for it has fluctuated for years, but it has also been adopted by the Chinese who, together with the Italians, are believed by some cooks to be the only peoples who can prepare it to its best advantage