

Basic Thyme-Roasted Supermarket Vegetable Platter

If you've never roasted vegetables before, this tried-and-true method just may change your winter cooking habits. Roasting at high heat caramelizes the vegetables' natural sugars, and causes them to collapse and sweeten. You want to give them a good stir every now and again, and keep them in the oven until they've got visible brown spots. You can substitute thick-cut fennel, onions, potatoes, parsnips, diced butternut squash, and a whole host of other vegetables with equally delicious results. Just keep the sizes fairly uniform, and use your judgment with the oil. You may need a little more, or less, than indicated.

Makes 4 to 6 servings, depending on starting quantity of vegetables

1 supermarket crudité platter (no celery, please)
2 to 4 teaspoons extra-virgin olive oil, or a little more
1/2 to 1 teaspoon red wine vinegar
1/2 to 1 teaspoon kosher salt
Freshly ground black pepper
Thyme sprigs

Your goal is to roast the vegetables in a single layer, with some space in between each one. If you pile too much on one sheet pan, the veggies will steam rather than caramelize. This is bad.

Preheat the oven to 425 degrees, with the racks in the center and upper third of the oven. If necessary, divide vegetables between two rimmed baking sheets. (Do not spray, line, or otherwise coat the sheets.)

If using two sheets, use the larger amount of oil, vinegar, and salt above, and divide the quantities between the two sheet pans. Drizzle the veggies with oil and vinegar, sprinkle with the salt and freshly ground black pepper, and nestle a few thyme sprigs here and there. Shmoosh the oil and seasonings with clean hands to coat, then rearrange into a single layer.

Roast in the hot oven for about 20 to 30 minutes, stirring with a heatproof spatula or tongs halfway through and reversing the order of the sheet pans. You want the vegetables to become al dente and browned, and this may take a little more or less time depending on the size of the crudités and what vegetables you choose to roast. Also, the tomatoes will pop and shrink. This is perfectly normal, so do not be alarmed. Embrace them like you would a favorite cousin, or a doll. Do not overcook.