

# **VARIETY AND MODERATION**

by Gudrun Maybaum

There are a lot of opinions, sometimes fanatic, about what one should eat. With humans, that means macrobiotic, or vegetarian, or fruitism, or our ancestors' diet, etc. With our birds, it is pellets or not, seeds or not. Though most of us agree on one thing: fresh vegetables and fruits are good for humans and birds.

Now let's look into that one. For example, broccoli is a vegetable with one of the highest nutritional contents known. Even cooked, it has more vitamin C than oranges and almost as much beta carotene as carrots. Research shows it kills bacteria, protects against toxins and possesses many more very valuable qualities. This list goes on and on. So, why don't we eat and feed our birds just broccoli every day? Because broccoli, like spinach, kale and some other green vegetables, contains a component that, eaten daily and without balancing with other foods, leads to hypothyroidism.

Or let's take celery. It supports the kidneys and urinary system, and helps with high blood pressure, gout, arthritis and rheumatism. But it is high in plant nitrates, which can be neutralized by adding vitamin C-rich foods, e.g. orange juice, in the same meal. Another example is peas, which have almost the same nutrients as liver. They are rich in protein, iron, zinc, carotenes, folic acid and other B vitamins. But peas, like all legumes, are high in purines, which can exacerbate gout attacks in people and birds with this disease. Spinach and rhubarb contain oxalates, which among other effects inhibit calcium absorption. We can keep going like this for pages.

Almost all vegetables, fruits, herbs and spices have health promoting, even healing, properties when consumed in moderation. But many of them also have built-in properties that are for protective or other purposes, which when consumed too often or in large amounts can make them harmful. Good does not necessarily mean more is better. The key is variety and moderation.

We don't have to offer a great variety on a daily basis, when we have only one or a few birds. We can offer one to two kinds of vegetables and fruits and change them daily or every few days. Some birds are ground feeders (like budgies and cockatiels) and they normally eat more seeds in their natural environment. While it is often hard to convince this kind to eat some fruit or vegetables, patience will get us there. Other birds (like Macaws and Amazons) seldom feed at ground level since they live mostly in the forest canopy and don't have many seeds available. Fruits, bark and greens are their natural diet.

We know that if we offer a variety in one bowl our birds eat the same stuff every day and throw out most of the rest. The best way to make sure they eat a variety is to give them one or two kinds at a time. A good way to do that is to feed them fresh vegetables/fruits in the morning, some soaked or sprouted seeds later on and pellets (depending on the species) in the evening. Like us humans, birds like variety too. Mine even get tired of seeds, so when once or twice a week I bring a dried fruit/vegetable mix or nuts they all go "hmmm" and then I don't hear them for a long time, because they dig into their dishes.

Article reprinted from: [www.yourparrotplace.com](http://www.yourparrotplace.com)