

# Seasonal Fruits and Vegetables



## What does it mean to eat in season?

Eating in season means eating fresh foods being harvested right now – not half-way around the world, but closer to home. With food now shipped from all over the world to our local stores, it's easy to forget that different foods grow in different seasons. While you may see strawberries in January or winter squash in July, those foods likely traveled from far away, where the growing seasons are at different times of the year.

## Why is it good to eat in season?

Eating in season has many benefits, such as:

- **You may save money.** It costs more to transport produce from overseas to your local store than it does from somewhere closer by. When you eat fresh foods in season, you don't pay as much for transportation costs.
- **Your food may taste better.** Foods grown and picked at their peak typically taste better. Compare the taste of a strawberry in May to a strawberry in January — you may never go back!
- **You may get more nutrients from your food.** Produce starts to lose nutrients after being picked. The longer the travel time to your store, the more nutrients are lost.

## How can I eat more seasonal foods?

Try these tips for buying your produce in season:

- **Know what's in season.** The chart on page 50 shows the typical peak growing season for the entire United States. Use it to find which fruits and vegetables are available at the best price and freshness at different times of year. To check out what's in season in your state, click on your state on the map found here: [www.simplesteps.org/eat-local](http://www.simplesteps.org/eat-local).
- **Visit your local farmers market.** This is where you will find foods grown closest to home.
- **Check the signs at your store.** Look at the sticker on your fruits and vegetables — it must state what country the food was grown in. Ask the produce manager if any fruits and vegetables were grown at nearby farms. Local foods are becoming more readily available at large retail grocers.

Most farmers markets accept SNAP or WIC benefits. Find a local market by searching this site: <http://search.ams.usda.gov/farmersmarkets/>. On the "payment accepted" tab, check to see the form of payment you can use.

## How can I still eat a variety of fruits and vegetables when seasonal produce is limited?

- **Eat fruits and veggies in all their forms.** Buying canned or frozen produce is a great way to get plenty of fruits and veggies year-round at a good price. The chart above shows you which fruits and veggies are commonly found in other forms.
- **Use recipe substitutions.** Making a recipe in January that calls for summer squash? Use the chart on page 50 to find a seasonal veggie you can use instead. Check out the Sub It In handout on page 25 for more substitution ideas.
- **Store fruits and veggies** purchased at their peak (and at their cheapest!) for the less plentiful winter months. Follow the steps on the Freezing Fruits and Veggies handout on page 45.

Continued >

Seasonal Fruits and Vegetables continued >

 Available Frozen

 Available Canned

This chart shows peak growing season for the general United States. The peak season in your region may be longer or shorter.

Fruit or Vegetable	Jan.	Feb.	Mar.	Apr.	May	Jun.	Jul.	Aug.	Sep.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.
Apples 												
Beets  												
Bell peppers  												
Blueberries 												
Broccoli  												
Cabbage 												
Carrots  												
Cauliflower 												
Cherries  												
Collard greens  												
Corn  												
Cucumbers												
Eggplants												
Garlic												
Grapefruit 												
Grapes												
Lettuce/Salad greens												
Kiwi												
Melons												
Mushrooms  												
Onions 												
Oranges 												
Parsnips												
Peaches  												
Pears 												
Plums												
Potatoes  												
Raspberries 												
Spinach  												
Strawberries 												
Summer squash												
Sweet potatoes 												
Tomatoes 												
Turnips												
Winter squash 												

To learn more, visit: [www.fruitsandveggiesmorematters.org](http://www.fruitsandveggiesmorematters.org) and [http://snap.nal.usda.gov/foodstamp/nutrition\\_seasons.php](http://snap.nal.usda.gov/foodstamp/nutrition_seasons.php).