

Nutrition News

for Seniors


EAT WELL

Provided by the Nutrition Division of the Westchester County Department of Senior Programs and Services

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Fall Produce Picks

The sun is setting sooner, the nights are getting cooler and wool socks are starting to sound like a cozy idea. This is the perfect time to celebrate the seasonal gems of autumn! Think pumpkin, beets, sweet potato, spaghetti squash, kale, pears, okra, parsnips and cranberries! Head to your local market and fill your basket with some of these fall produce picks. Here are some nutrition facts and cooking tips on a few.

Beets

Beets are edible from their leafy greens down to the bulbous root. The leaves are similar to spinach and are delicious sautéed. The grocery store most likely will carry red beets; your local farmers market may have more interesting varieties, such as golden or bull's blood, which has a bullseye pattern of rings. The red color in beets is caused by an antioxidant called betanin, making beet juice a natural alternative to red food coloring. Beets are rich in naturally occurring nitrates and may help to support healthy blood pressure. Roasting or steaming beets whole takes the fuss out of peeling — the skin easily slides off. They're also delicious raw, shredded and tossed in salads or thinly sliced and baked into chips.



Sweet Potato

Sweet potatoes charge ahead of white potatoes in terms of fiber and vitamins A and C. Sweet potatoes actually make a great breakfast. Bake them in the oven until they're soft ahead of time. At breakfast, warm one up in the microwave and add a teaspoon of a buttery spread made with butter and olive oil and a sprinkle of cinnamon. This makes a hearty breakfast when paired with some lowfat yogurt or glass of milk.

Kale



Kale is a nutrient powerhouse. It tastes sweeter after a frost and can survive a snowstorm. If you plant kale in your garden, you can dig it out of the snow and serve fresh salad in January! One cup of raw kale has only 33 calories and is loaded with vitamins A, C and K as well as manganese. Kale is great sautéed and cooked in soup, but is also excellent raw in salad; simply remove tough stems, slice into thin slivers and pair with something a bit sweet such as carrots or apples.

One advantage of using kale for your leafy greens is that you can add your dressing ahead of time; the kale becomes more tender and delicious, not wilted.

Pears

When we can buy fruits year-round, we tend to forget they do have a season. However, pears are the most delicious in the fall when they're at their peak. Pears are unique in that they do not ripen on the tree; they will ripen at room temperature after they're picked. How do you know when they are ready to eat? Check the neck! If the fruit near the stem gives to a little pressure, it is ripe. There are a wide range of pear flavors and textures. And just like apples, some are excellent eaten fresh while others are best cooked or canned for the winter. If you eat the peel too, one medium pear has 6 grams of fiber - that's 20 percent of our daily recommendation!



Parsnips

Parsnips are cousins to carrots — they have the same root shape but with white flesh. They're typically eaten cooked, but also can be eaten raw. One-half cup of cooked parsnips is full of fiber (3 grams) and more than 10 percent of the average daily requirement of vitamin C, folate and manganese. Try these pale beauties roasted, pureed into soup or mashed.

Cranberries

Fall is the time to get to know these tart berries and their wealth of nutritional benefits. You may have heard of resveratrol in association with red wine, but this antioxidant is also found in cranberries. It may help to protect our hearts from oxidative damage as well as support healthy blood pressure. Another benefit? Cranberries may help protect from urinary tract infection. They contain a compound called proanthocyanidin that prevents harmful bacteria from sticking to your bladder wall. Fresh cranberries can be eaten raw but are often cooked. Dried cranberries are delicious in grain and vegetable salads and make a healthy snack on the go.



Source: Adapted from "Fall Produce Picks", www.eartight.org. Holly Larson, MS, RD. Reviewed August 2014.

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