

CULINARY ARTS & WELLNESS GUIDEBOOK



THE
WELLNESS
COMPANION
HUB

A WARM

Welcome



This holistic guidebook was created to highlight the medicinal qualities of food, share nourishing and accessible recipes, and inspire sustainable practices that support both personal health and the wellbeing for our bodies and our planet. Inside, you'll find practical wellness tools, tips for mindful eating, and creative ways to explore food as a pathway to balance, resilience, and joy.

At The Wellness Companion Hub, our goal is to uplift students by offering knowledge and resources that make everyday choices feel empowering.

We know that navigating school, work, and life can be overwhelming and we hope this Culinary Arts & Wellness Guidebook helps support you. Through food, wellness practices, and a sense of community, we hope to help students feel nourished, supported, and inspired to care for their body, mind, and spirit.



THE

Plant



Based

DIET

COOKING WITH SUPERFOODS

Foods from these plant sources have excellent internal and external benefits for your overall health and well-being. A diet rich in plant foods is an essential component of a healthy diet and a proactive way to improve and maintain a healthy you. The Western diet has become synonymous with eating lots of processed foods and meat, lots of added fat and sugar, lots of refined grains, and lots of everything except eating the most beneficial fruits and vegetables.

Food activist and journalist Michael Pollan explains that, "In countries where people eat a pound or more of vegetables and fruits a day, the rate of cancer is half what it is in the United States."

Also, by eating a diet that is primarily plant based, you consume far fewer calories. Plant-based food helps protect your body against many chronic diseases found in Western society such as obesity, type 2 diabetes, cardiovascular disease and cancer.

THERE IS NO LEGAL OR MEDICAL DEFINITION FOR SUPERFOODS

The term is used to describe foods that have been proven to reduce the risk of chronic disease and prolong life as a result of their high nutrient or phytochemical content. There are thousands of phytochemicals in plant-based foods—many have been proven beneficial to human function and health. Certain phytochemicals may also be called antioxidants, flavonoids, anthocyanins, carotenoids, and polyphenols. Superfoods are most often plant foods that are nutrient powerhouses packed full of vitamins, antioxidants, minerals and polyphenols.

SOME PLANT-BASED SUPERFOODS INCLUDE:

ASPARAGUS

AVOCADO

BLUEBERRIES

GARLIC

BROCCOLI

POMEGRANATE

SWEET POTATO

KALE

BE AN EDUCATED PRODUCE CONSUMER



LEARN AVAILABILITY, SELECTION AND GRADING GUIDELINES

The biggest misconception about produce today is that it is naturally available year-round. Due to the effects of globalization (the process of international integration arising from the interchange of worldviews, products, ideas and other aspects of culture) you can find just about every type of fruit, vegetable and herb every day of the year, even when those items are out of season in your locality.

If you are buying strawberries in December, you are likely purchasing berries that were picked six months ago and stored in a climate controlled facility or stored in a shipping container that has traveled halfway across the globe from the southern hemisphere. This extra time between picking and eating translates to a loss of freshness and sacrifice in flavor and nutrients.

Fruits, vegetables and herbs that are in season in your geographic area are at their quality and flavor peak. For example, corn, apricots and peaches that grow locally in summer months will have a superior quality and flavor than the same produce grown in far away climates (such as the southern hemisphere, where it is summer during your winter months—and vice versa) and then shipped.

However, some produce items ship well: apples, asparagus, heads of lettuce, broccoli, some melons and citrus fruits.

Certain fruits and vegetables are only available during specific times of the year while others, such as cauliflower, carrots, fennel and avocados, can be found over the course of a few seasons.

Like vegetables, fruits also have a peak season where they flourish and taste best. While most are available for just one season, others, such as oranges, plums and rhubarb, can be grown and harvested a few times throughout the year.

In recent years, vegetables are often grown hydroponically (in nutrient-enriched water rather than soil). Hydroponic growing takes place indoors under regulated temperature and light conditions so that growing seasons may be systematically duplicated. Hydroponically grown lettuces, spinach, herbs and tomatoes are available year-round, but have a less pronounced flavor than fruits and vegetables grown in natural conditions.



By following these availability, selection and grading guidelines, you will be able to select higher quality, lower cost and good-tasting produce. Importing fruits and vegetables (not in season in your region) means more cost. Saving money, getting better, fresher food and keeping farmers in your area happy is possible when purchasing from local sources.

Here are the guidelines to follow:

Abide by natural availability—pay attention to local weather conditions and seasonal availability of produce. By purchasing fruits, vegetables and herbs that are in season, you gain whole foods with stronger flavors and higher nutritional value. Added benefits to buying seasonal produce are cost savings and a heightened sense of anticipation and appreciation for each season’s bounty.

Know the source of fruits, vegetables and herbs. Befriend a produce manager, distributor or farmer at your grocery store or farmers’ market. This close relationship will allow you to gain knowledge about their farming and operational practices. Plus, you’ll get fresh farm-to-table produce, most likely picked just a few hours or a few days earlier. By establishing a relationship with people who work to raise and deliver fresh produce, you support local businesses and family run farms that help put money back into the community where you live. Get the inside scoop on the best seasonal produce to buy and you may also pick up creative cooking tips and recipes to showcase the produce.

Simplify the cooking process by buying fresh produce. When produce is fresh, the addition of only a few herbs and spices is all you need to help the dish shine. If you think of freshness as the most important ingredient in your cooking, your dishes will be superb. Your featured vegetable or fruit ingredient will shine and make a satisfying and nourishing meal because the time between farm and table is short.

To know what fruits, vegetables and herbs are in season use seasonal sourcing charts. Remember that the availability of fruits, vegetables and herbs differ from year to year based on weather conditions, geography, pest infestation and soil conditions.

To help ensure the quality of fruits and vegetables, order produce according to grade. Find the information tables that are available from the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA). Items may be graded according to state standards, so check with state agricultural departments as well.

Know how to use lower grades of fruits and vegetables. Use lower grade fruits and vegetables in preparing juices, smoothies, soups and purees. When perfect appearance is not a factor in the recipe, bruising or discoloration of lower graded produce is permissible.

Freeze, freeze-dry, can or dehydrate lower grade fruits and vegetables. To utilize out of season produce all year round, preservation and storage of lower grade produce is ideal. Peas, corn, spinach and most berries freeze and store well. Canning involves science—learn the proper techniques to avoid dangers involving heat, glass and contamination (botulism).



PREPARATION GUIDELINES FOR FRESH VEGETABLES, FRUITS AND HERBS

Following these important preparation guidelines for preparing fresh vegetables, fruits and herbs results in a safer and more attractive end product—the meal itself.



- All fresh produce—even those to be peeled—must be washed well
- Washing produce thoroughly removes surface dirt, bacteria and other contaminants
- To best preserve the shelf life of produce, it is important to wash fruits and vegetables as close to preparation time as possible
- Make all vegetable, fruit and herb cuts uniform in shape and size so vegetables cook evenly and have a neat, attractive appearance
- Perform cutting tasks as close to the time of cooking as possible to preserve quality
- Select the right cutlery tool for the job
- Keep all cutlery tools in good working condition
- Keep a sharpening steel on hand whenever cutting produce and herbs as sharp knife blades are necessary
- Swivel-bladed peelers are used for produce with thin skins (carrots, parsnips, asparagus, apples, pears and potatoes)
- Paring knives can be used in place of a vegetable peeler in some instances
- Chef knives are used for cutting large or tough-skinned vegetables and fruit
- Vegetables should be trimmed in order to remove roots, cores, stems or seeds
- When preparing round fruits or vegetables, slice away one side so it will not roll
- For vegetables or fruit to be julienned or diced, cut a slice from each side and both ends to make an even rectangle or square

"KEEP WELL BY EATING WELL
— POP LOCKER

THE HEALTH BENEFITS ASSOCIATED WITH FRUITS & VEGETABLES



The color wheel of vegetables and fruit reflects the different phytochemicals they contain. These plant based chemicals help protect against chronic disease and illness. Consuming a diet full of vegetables and fruits of all colors helps you achieve good health and longevity.

PHYTOCHEMICALS

Chemical compounds made by plants and consumed by humans bring health benefits. Thousands of phytochemicals have been discovered; very few are understood. Some of the most common phytochemicals include beta carotene and other carotenoids, flavonoids, polyphenols, ascorbic acid (vitamin C), folic acid and vitamin E. Some phytochemicals are called antioxidants because they neutralize other chemicals known as free radicals—or unstable molecules that result from oxidation, or chemical breakdown—in the body.

WHAT ANTIOXIDANTS DO

- Lower risk of diseases like cancer and heart disease
- Slow aging in the skin, eyes, and brain
- Boost immunity to fight off illness
- Slow the progression of age-related muscular degeneration



WHAT ANTHOCYANINS DO

- Reduce the risks of cancer
- Enhance cognitive function
- Aid in weight loss and ulcer treatment
- Strengthen eyesight and heart health
- Act as an anti-inflammatory
- Prevent the occurrence of diabetes

WHAT FLAVONOIDS DO

- Help protect blood vessels from rupture or leakage
- Enhance the power of vitamin C in your body
- Protect cells from oxidation (imbalance of acid/alkali) damage
- Prevent inflammation in the body

WHAT CAROTENOIDS DO

- Protect your cells from the damaging effects of free radicals
- Provide a source of vitamin A
- Enhance the functioning of your immune system
- Help your reproductive system function properly

WHAT POLYPHENOLS DO

- Reduce the risks of cancer
- Reduce the risks of heart disease
- Help lower LDL cholesterol or “bad” cholesterol in the body

Leafy Stuff

AKA: LEAFY GREENS
(INCL. BRASSICAS & LETTUCE FAMILY)

FOR SALADS & QUICK SAUTÉS

Tender leaves like lettuce, kale, chard, and bok choy make fast salads and 5-minute sautés. Wash, dry well, and toss with a simple dressing—or wilt in a pan with garlic and a splash of broth. Tip: massage tougher greens (like kale) with a little oil to soften.



ARUGULA

IN SEASON: SPRING & WINTER

Arugula has been growing wild along the Mediterranean since ancient Roman times. Today, it is enjoyed around the world for its sharp peppery flavor.

Also known as rocket, arugula has dark green, sword-shaped or oval leaves with deep notches along the edges. Arugula is in season spring through autumn.



MEDICINAL QUALITIES

- Arugula is a good source of vitamins A, C, K
- Arugula is packed full of calcium and iron
- Arugula contains beta-carotene and lutein which are antioxidant carotenoids that help prevent cancer and eye disease (macular degeneration)

SELECTION GUIDELINES

- Choose arugula leaves that are vibrant green in color and have long slender looking leaves
- Arugula may be loose or in bunches
- Avoid leaves that are wilted, bruised or discolored
- Handle arugula with care to avoid bruising or tearing the delicate leaves
- Wash thoroughly to remove excess dirt or grit
- Immerse arugula leaves in cold water to wash
- Remove leaves gently from the washing container to let grit settle at the bottom
- Repeat process with clean water until arugula is completely grit free
- Dry leaves thoroughly with a salad spinner or use a clean kitchen towel
- Remove thick stem ends to achieve a more delicate texture if called for by the recipe

PREPARATION GUIDELINES

- Arugula is used in salads because of its sharp and spicy taste
- Arugula goes well with salty and tangy cheeses like goat, blue and feta
- Arugula is a good match for candied nuts, like walnuts
- Arugula salads may be sweetened with peaches, melons, pears, beets, figs or berries
- Mix arugula with mild greens to achieve a well-balanced flavor in seasonal salads
- Arugula is a highly prized leafy green in Italy where it is popularly used in pasta sauces like pesto
- Fresh arugula may be used as the final topping on pizzas with salty cured meats like prosciutto
- Italians also love using aged balsamic vinaigrettes when working with arugula because the sweet and slightly acidic flavor of the balsamic vinegar cuts through the peppery flavor of the leafy green
- Fresh arugula can be stirred into soups, folded into potato salads and wilted to serve as a bed for roasted or grilled fish, poultry and meats

STORAGE GUIDELINES

- To keep arugula bunches fresh, wrap stems in damp paper towels
- Store washed arugula in an air-tight plastic bag
- Refrigerate washed and bagged arugula for up to two days

BOK CHOY

IN SEASON: SPRING & WINTER

Bok Choy, also known as Pak Choi, Bai Cai, or Chinese Cabbage, has a history dating back over 5,000 years, originating in the heart of China, and is thought to be one of the oldest Asian greens.

Belonging to the Chinese Cabbage family, it distinguishes itself with its broader leaves and smaller size compared to typical cabbage varieties. Its pale green stalks set it apart both in taste and appearance. Its mild, slightly peppery flavor adds depth to stir-fries, soups, salads, and more. Plus, its crunchy texture and high nutritional value make it a favorite among health-conscious eaters.

Bok Choy was introduced in the United States during the Gold Rush in the 19th century and was brought over by Chinese Immigrants. In Taiwan, Hong Kong, and mainland China, farmers grow more than 20 varieties of Bok Choy, but in the United States, we normally grow Regular, Shanghai, and Baby Bok Choy.

This leafy green thrives in cooler climates, flourishing during the fall and spring seasons. Its effortless growth makes it a favored option for home gardeners and farmers.

MEDICINAL QUALITIES

- Loaded with antioxidants, Bok Choy stands as a nutritional powerhouse, delivering a plethora of essential vitamins and minerals.
- Notably rich in vitamins A, C, and K, along with folate, calcium, and iron, bok choy supports overall health and vitality.
- Abundant in vitamin C bolsters the immune system.
- Good source of potassium, magnesium, and calcium content which aid in natural blood pressure management.

SELECTION GUIDELINES

- Choose bok choy with firm, moist, unblemished stems, and bright green leaves.
- Avoid wilted or bruised leaves that have yellowing or browning, holes or tears.

STORAGE GUIDELINES

- Store unwashed bok choy in a plastic bag in the refrigerator for up to 1 week.



CABBAGE

IN SEASON: SUMMER

Green cabbage has smooth, pale green leaves; Savoy cabbage has wrinkled leaves with a crunchy texture that works well in coleslaws and salads; Napa cabbage (also called Chinese or celery cabbage) has an elongated shape with wide, flat white stems and wrinkled, pale yellow-green leaves.

Red cabbage is similar to green cabbage but its deep reddish-purple color comes from growing in acidic soil, and it has a faint peppery taste and thicker outer leaves that allow for longer storage.



MEDICINAL QUALITIES

- Cabbage is one of the least expensive vitamin-rich foods
- Cabbage is an excellent source of vitamin C
- Cabbages contain a high percentage of dietary fiber
- Both green and red cabbage are great sources of vitamin K
- Cabbages have significant levels of the mineral iron

SELECTION GUIDELINES

- Choose cabbage with tightly formed heads and smooth or wrinkled leaves depending on the specific variety
- Select cabbage that is heavy, firm to the touch and vibrant in color
- Avoid green cabbage that appears white (loss of natural pigment indicates it was stored too long)
- The stem end of fresh cabbage has no cracks around the base

PREPARATION GUIDELINES

- Discard wilted outer leaves and remove the cabbage's tough core before cooking
- The tough leaves of cabbage are sliced or shredded with a sharp knife, mandoline or food processor
- Use fresh cabbage as soon as possible; it loses freshness and nutrient value after being harvested
- For centuries, Europeans have pickled green cabbage as sauerkraut
- Cabbages are favored for pickling because it is cheap to preserve and can last throughout long winters

- Cabbage is also boiled or steamed and then stuffed with savory fillings such as beef or pork, vegetables, herbs and grains like barley or rice
- Cabbage can also be chopped or shredded and added into a variety of soups such as the Vietnamese noodle soup, pho or the Russian cabbage soup, shchi
- Cabbage is braised until sweet and tender to accompany dishes with fish, pork, game or sausage
- In German cuisine, red cabbage is often braised with red wine vinegar and apples and paired with cooked meat and dumplings called spaetzle
- Cabbage is often incorporated into fillings for Asian dumplings
- Cabbage adds depth of flavor and texture when stir-fried with other meat, fish and vegetables
- Both green and red cabbage tossed with mayonnaise or different dressings to make sweet or spicy coleslaw
- Cabbages are used in a variety of colorful salads, and is also used for garnishing tacos or Thai noodle dishes like pad thai
- Cooked red cabbage leaves oxidize and turn a pale blue color due to heat so add a small amount of vinegar or lemon juice, or use acidic ingredients such as apples or wine, during cooking to retain the vibrant red color

STORAGE GUIDELINES

- Store whole heads of green and red cabbage in the refrigerator for up to two weeks
- Loose-leaved savoy and Chinese cabbage varieties can be stored for five or six days
- The older cabbage gets the stronger the flavor and odor it produces
- Consume raw cabbage within three or four days

CHARD

IN SEASON: FALL & WINTER

Leafy Chard is actually a member of the root vegetable family. It has firm, wrinkled, vibrant colored leaves on long fleshy ribbed stems and has a slightly bitter earthy flavor. Depending on the variety, stems and ribs can be scarlet red, golden yellow or pearly white with green leaves. Red, or ruby, chard has a slightly earthier flavor than the sweet flavored white-stemmed chard.

Swiss chard is in season during autumn and winter and is abundant at local farmer's markets during these cooler months.



MEDICINAL QUALITIES

- Swiss chard has a high quantity of vitamin K
- Swiss chard is also a good source of vitamin A & C
- Swiss chard contains the mineral potassium
- Swiss chard is full of the mineral iron
- Swiss chard is an excellent source of dietary fiber
- The minerals magnesium and calcium are found in Swiss chard
- One cup of Swiss chard has seven calories

SELECTION GUIDELINES

- Choose Swiss chard bunches with vibrantly colored crisp large leaves
- Avoid selecting Swiss chard bunches that have any discolored leaves
- Swiss chard leaves that have dry or wilted ribs that bend to the touch are not fresh

PREPARATION GUIDELINES

- Wash Swiss chard as you with spinach to remove dirt
- Use a paring knife to remove tough veins and fibrous stems from the leaves
- For recipes that ask for stems, cook them separately from the leaves
- Swiss chard is used in soups, sauces, curries, tagines and dips
- Swiss chard is braised or sautéed with aromatic vegetables for side dishes
- Swiss chard can also be chopped for salads
- Chard can be used as a filling for empanadas, enchiladas, savory fritters and pancakes or crepes
- Swiss chard adds flavor and texture to egg, pizza, pasta and grain dishes and compliments hearty casseroles

STORAGE GUIDELINES

- Store Swiss chard in a plastic bag and refrigerate for up to five days



COLLARDS

IN SEASON: SPRING, SUMMER & WINTER

Collard greens date back to prehistoric times and are one of the oldest members of the cabbage family. The ancient Greeks cultivated collards, and they have been grown in many parts of the world for centuries. In the United States, the tradition of cooking greens in the South was deeply influenced by the knowledge and practices of enslaved Africans, who brought with them rich food traditions that shaped Southern cuisine. Today, collard greens are especially associated with soul food, a cuisine that honors African American history and culture.

The flavor of collard greens lies between cabbage and kale. They grow as a loose bouquet instead of a tight head, like other cabbage. It is sold fresh as a loose bunch of leaves and it can also be sold frozen. Collard greens are in season from January through April, but are available year-round.



MEDICINAL QUALITIES

- Collard greens are a good source of vitamin A, C, K and fiber
- Collards are rich in magnesium, phosphorus, potassium, folate, and beta-carotene
- One cup of collards provides almost the same amount of calcium as eight ounces of milk
- Collards have valuable cancer-fighting phytochemicals
- They are a significant source of lutein and zeaxanthin, two carotenoids that are important nutrients for eye health

SELECTION GUIDELINES

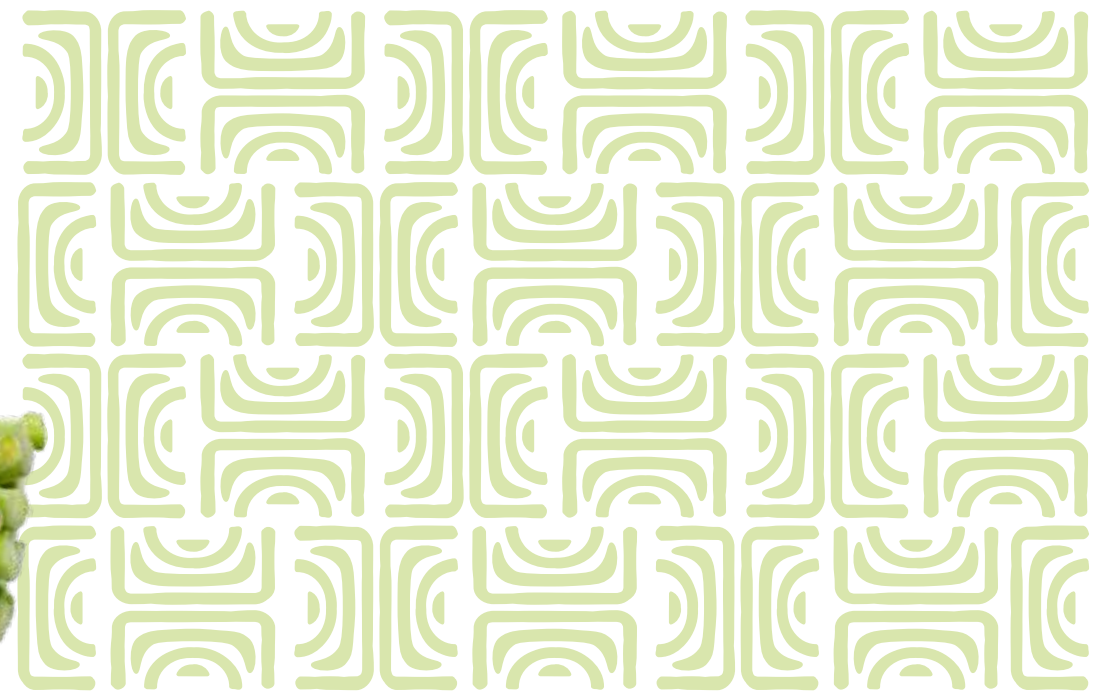
- Select bunches of collard greens that are dark green in color
- Avoid selecting collards with yellowing leaves

PREPARATION GUIDELINES

- Fresh collard greens need to be cleaned thoroughly before cooking
- Simmered for several hours, collard greens achieve a tender texture
- Collards can be boiled and sautéed
- In Southern cooking, collards are cooked with bacon or salt pork
- Collards are served with beans, especially black-eyed peas
- Collard greens can be enjoyed simply with sweet butter and sea salt
- Collard greens add texture and flavor to stews, soups, curries, stir-fry dishes
- They can be cooked and added to rice, pasta and egg dishes

STORAGE GUIDELINES

- Store collards in the refrigerator in a plastic bag for up to five days.



KALE

IN SEASON: SPRING & WINTER

Kale is actually a member of the cabbage family. Kale was gathered in the wild as far back as the times of the ancient Egyptians, Greeks and Romans. It has firm, dark green leaves that are tightly wrinkled. Kale grows on long stems and has an earthy and slightly bitter flavor similar to cabbage. Kale is in season during autumn and winter.



MEDICINAL QUALITIES

- Kale has more vitamin C than an orange
- Kale is a great source of alpha-linolenic acid (ALA), the omega-3 fatty acid essential for brain and heart health and is thought to help reduce the risk of type 2 diabetes
- Kale has plenty of phytonutrients (natural chemicals found in certain plant foods believed to be beneficial to human health) such as quercetin which helps combat inflammation and helps prevent plaque formation in the arteries
- Kale is a great source of calcium
- Kale's health-promoting compounds are more effective when eaten in combination with foods that are fatty or acidic (acids like lemon juice help the iron found in kale to be more available to the body)

SELECTION GUIDELINES

- Choose kale bunches that have dark green and large crisp leaves
- Avoid kale bunches that have brown or yellow leaves
- Avoid kale leaves with dry or wilted ribs that bend to the touch

PREPARATION GUIDELINES

- Wash kale thoroughly to remove excess dirt
- Use a paring knife to remove tough veins and fibrous stems from the leaves
- For recipes that include stems, cook separately from the leaves
- Kale holds up well to different cooking methods due to its sturdy texture
- There is a range of kale varieties; the most favored kinds are the Italian varieties that have narrow, tapered leaves, and Dinosaur Kale (cavolo nero), prized for its dark green color
- Kale is used in soups, sauces, curries, dips and braised or sautéed with aromatic vegetables as side dishes
- Kale can be chopped and used as a filling for meat, poultry or fish
- Kale adds robust flavor to egg and pasta dishes in addition to hearty casseroles.
- Kale is favored for use in juices (especially for cleanse diets)
- Kale makes nutritious salads especially when combined with lemon juice and olive oil
- By dehydrating or baking kale leaves with herbs, spices flavorings, kale becomes crispy, like potato chips

STORAGE GUIDELINES

- Store kale in the refrigerator in a plastic bag for up to five days

DELICATE LETTUCE

IN SEASON: SPRING & SUMMER

Delicate lettuces come in many different varieties and are known for having a mild, sweet flavor and tender texture. These leafy plants are grown around the world and were cultivated first by the ancient Egyptians. Delicate lettuces, once considered to be weeds, now are grown for their flavorful leaves. These lettuce varieties spread to the Greeks and Romans who named it lactuca, the root of the English word lettuce.

Peak seasons for delicate lettuces are spring and autumn. Farmers' markets may sell baby greens, or tiny, young and delicate lettuce leaves. In addition, mesclun, which means mix in French, is found at farmers' markets. It consists of the first greens and herbs of spring. Mesclun mixes differ in lettuce varieties and are favored for their wide range of colors and textures.



DELICATE LETTUCE VARIETIES INCLUDE:

ROMAINE / COS BABY MACHE
OAK LEAF RED LEAF BIBB
JAPANESE TATSOI BUTTER

MEDICINAL QUALITIES

- Butter, oak leaf, tatsoi and romaine lettuces are rich in vitamins A, B, C and K
- Delicate lettuces contain calcium, potassium, folate and magnesium
- Tatsoi lettuce is high in beta carotene, iron and phosphorus
- Mâche lettuce is high in omega-3 fatty acids which are essential fatty acids that help prevent heart disease

SELECTION GUIDELINES

- Select delicate lettuce heads that are heavy for their size and have healthy looking leaves
- Avoid choosing delicate lettuces that are wilted, torn or brown in color

PREPARATION GUIDELINES

- Wash greens just before serving
- Immerse leaves in cold water to remove excess dirt
- Repeat the process with clean water until the lettuce is completely grit free and clean
- Once fully washed, remove leaves gently and dry them thoroughly with a salad spinner or with a clean kitchen towel

- Dry lettuce well to avoid diluting the mild lettuce flavor
- Properly dried lettuce ensures that dressing will coat the leaves evenly
- Tear large leaves into pieces instead of cutting; gentle tearing limits discoloration and crushing of leaves.
- Delicate lettuces are best used for salads where their mild flavor can be the focal point
- Use ingredients that will not overpower the delicate flavor of the lettuce
- When pairing vinaigrettes and dressings with delicate lettuce, use only mildly acidic ones so the flavor of the greens stands out
- Simple is always best when creating salads using delicate lettuces
- Butter lettuce pairs well with creamy dressings that have buttermilk or goat cheese which add a silky texture to the delicate lettuce
- The tender Bibb lettuce is commonly used in Asian cuisine for lettuce wraps or lettuce cups which combine a variety of vegetables, chili paste, soy sauce, aromatics and chicken, pork or tofu
- Any delicate lettuce on sandwiches adds a crisp texture

STORAGE GUIDELINES

- Store loose greens unwashed in a plastic bag refrigerated for up to four days

STURDY LETTUCE

IN SEASON: WINTER

Sturdy lettuces have a darker color, thicker texture and stronger flavor than delicate lettuces.

Food historians believe that sturdy lettuces were gathered in the wild and then cultivated as long ago as the time of the ancient Egyptians, Greeks and Romans.

Winter is the peak season for sturdy lettuces, despite being available year-round.



STURDY LETTUCE VARIETIES INCLUDE:

CHICORY	ICEBERG
BLACK-SEEDED SIMPSON	
GREEN LEAF	ROMAINE

MEDICINAL QUALITIES

- The darker the leaf, the higher the nutrients
- A half-cup serving of green lettuce has under 17 calories
- Romaine has the highest amount of vitamin A
- Green leaf has the most vitamin K
- Iceberg lettuce has the least vitamins (it has some B vitamins) and nutrients of any lettuce because its leaves get less sunlight

SELECTION GUIDELINES

- Select sturdy lettuce heads that have vibrant fresh looking leaves
- Avoid choosing sturdy lettuces that are wilted, torn or brown in color
- Large, thick stemmed lettuces indicate that they taste of bitterness

PREPARATION GUIDELINES

- Wash greens right before serving and immerse the leaves in cold water to remove excess dirt
- Repeat the process with clean water until the lettuce is completely grit free and clean

- Once fully washed, remove leaves and dry them thoroughly with a salad spinner or with a clean kitchen towel
- Remove any large roots, yellow leaves or thick stalks
- Sturdy lettuces may be used for smoothies, juices, salads and sandwiches
- Sturdy lettuces may be sautéed or wilted before being added into soups at the tail end of cooking
- Romaine can be grilled and used as a side dish or used as a bed for fish and meat
- The Caesar is a classic salad that uses the romaine lettuce and combines parmesan cheese, raw egg, anchovies, garlic, lemon juice, olive oil, Worcestershire sauce, croutons (toasted bread) and black pepper to create a rich flavored salad
- Iceberg lettuce has a high water content and mixes well with other types of lettuce in salads
- Black-seeded Simpson lettuce has been a favorite of home gardeners for over 150 years because it grows well in many climates and peaks in early spring
- Julienned green leaf lettuce can be sautéed with peas and garlic for a side dish

STORAGE GUIDELINES

- Store sturdy greens unwashed in a plastic bag refrigerated for three to five days

SPINACH

IN SEASON: SPRING & AUTUMN

Spinach is native to central and southwestern Asia. The ancient Egyptians, Greeks, and Romans gathered and used wild spinach, but Persians were the first to cultivate it. In the seventh century was transported east to China and west to the Mediterranean.

Its dark and firm green leaves have an earthy, slightly bitter flavor. There are two main varieties of spinach: Savoy variety (curly leaf) and flat leaf. The Savoy variety has leaves that are wrinkled and thick in texture. Spinach is available year-round but peak seasons are spring and autumn.

MEDICINAL QUALITIES

- Spinach is a nutritional powerhouse because it is rich in iron, vitamins A and K
- Spinach has significant levels of magnesium
- Spinach is rich in folate, also known as folic acid
- Spinach provides valuable dietary fiber

SELECTION GUIDELINES

- Choose spinach bunches with dark green, crisp leaves and firm stems with a blush of pink at the ends
- Avoid spinach leaves that have discoloration or feel slimy
- Avoid bruised or torn spinach leaves

PREPARATION GUIDELINES

- Wash spinach thoroughly to remove dirt; spinach is often gritty
- Immerse spinach leaves in cold water to wash
- Remove leaves gently from wash container to let the grit settle at the bottom
- Repeat process with clean water until spinach is completely grit free
- Remove all roots and stems to achieve a more delicate texture for salads
- Flat leaf spinach is favored for making salads because it's less gritty than curly leaf spinach
- Baby spinach leaves have a mild, sweet flavor
- Delicate young spinach leaves are great for healthy salads and in sandwiches
- Mature spinach leaves are excellent sautéed, stir-fried or creamed with garlic for side dishes
- Mature spinach leaves can be added to hearty soups, dips, soufflés and casseroles
- Chopped spinach leaves are incorporated into curry, pasta, pizzas and egg dishes
- Chopped spinach is used as stuffing for fish, chicken and other savory entrees.
- Spinach is used in the crisp, triangle-shaped Greek spinach pie, spanakopita with filo dough, feta cheese, herbs and spices
- Spinach is popular in Indian dishes, such as vegetarian saag paneer (pureed spinach, spongy Indian cheese and basmati rice)

STORAGE GUIDELINES

- Store unwashed spinach in a plastic bag and refrigerate for three to five days



Flavor Starters

AKA: ALLIUMS
(INCL. ONIONS, GARLIC, LEEK)

CHOP, SIZZLE & SAUTE

Onions, garlic, and leeks form the base of countless dishes—sweat them gently to build sweetness and depth. A quick sauté in oil or butter before adding other ingredients instantly boosts flavor. Tip: low heat + patience = fewer tears and better taste.



GARLIC

IN SEASON: SPRING & SUMMER

Garlic flavors a wide variety of dishes and is considered indispensable in any kitchen. Food historians believe garlic predates onions and can be traced back to the Asian continent.

Garlic also takes two primary forms: the familiar bulb or head, and green garlic. Bulbs of garlic typically have 12-16 cloves clustered together within a papery white skin. Green garlic is the shoot that is harvested right before the plant begins to form cloves. Garlic is in peak season during the middle of the summer. Green garlic is found in spring at farmers' markets.



MEDICINAL QUALITIES

- Garlic is rich in natural chemicals called flavonoids
- Garlic contains a compound called allyl propyl disulphide (APDS) gives it a pungent odor and flavor and is thought to help lower blood sugar levels
- Garlic is good source of the calcium
- Garlic contains vitamin C
- Garlic contains fiber

SELECTION GUIDELINES

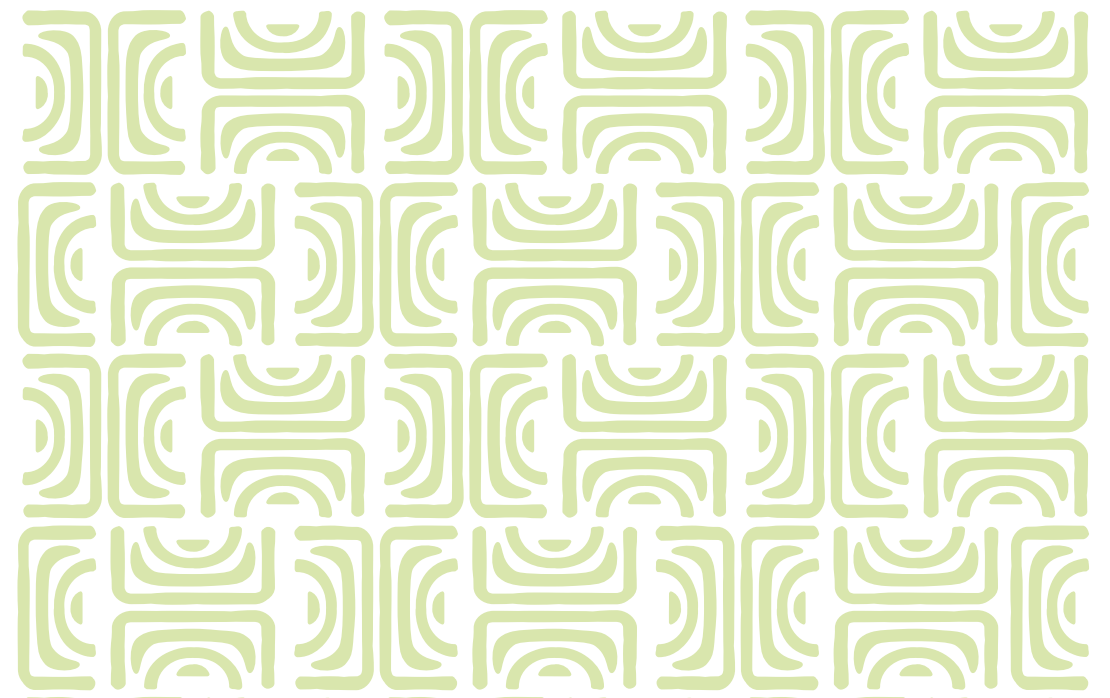
- Select garlic heads that are plump and firm to the touch
- Choose garlic heads that have a smooth, creamy white-to-purple colored skin
- Avoid selecting garlic heads that have soft spots or green sprouts

PREPARATION GUIDELINES

- Garlic gloves are used to flavor meat, poultry and seafood dishes
- Whole cloves of garlic are used in braising and roasting
- Garlic is minced or crushed
- Garlic is added to soups, sauces, aiolis, pasta and grain dishes
- Garlic is favored to add depth of flavor to oils, dressings and dips
- When cooking garlic in oil, be sure not to scorch cloves because they will develop an unpleasant bitter flavor.
- Garlic is sautéed with fresh vegetables to create side dishes

STORAGE GUIDELINES

- Store whole garlic heads in an open container in a cool, dark, well-ventilated place
- Store green garlic in a plastic bag in the refrigerator for up to four days



GREEN ONIONS & SCALLIONS

IN SEASON: SPRING & WINTER

Green onions, with their narrow white stems and long flat green leaves are the shoots of onion bulbs pulled from the ground before maturity. They are harvested year round in mild climates.

Green onions are also known as scallions (or spring onions) and they have a mild onion flavor.

MEDICINAL QUALITIES

- Green onions have vitamins A, C and K
- Green onions contain potassium
- Quercetin is found in the pigments of green onions and acts as an anti-inflammatory and antihistamine

SELECTION GUIDELINES

- Good green onions have tops that are vibrant green in color and are firm to the touch
- Choose green onions that have healthy looking stems and leaves
- Avoid choosing green onions that are wilted or feel slimy and have dried roots
- Bulb ends should be white in color, dry and clear of bruises

PREPARATION GUIDELINES

- Rinse green onions in running water to remove sand and grit from the layered leaves
- Trim off the root ends and green tops of the onions
- Peel the outer layer of the bulb before use
- Both the stalks and bulbs of green onions are edible and can be eaten raw or cooked
- Green onions are used in soups, savory salads, grain dishes, dips, salsas and sauces
- Also, green onions can be sautéed and used in a variety of vegetable and meat dishes or as a garnish for soups and chili dishes
- Green onions provide flavor and texture to potato and egg dishes and to quick breads like biscuits and cornbread
- Green onions can be grilled or roasted with olive oil and herbs as a side dish
- Green onions are used in Asian cuisine for flavoring dumplings, savory pancakes such as Korean scallion pancake, pa jun, spring rolls, stir-fries and dipping sauces

STORAGE GUIDELINES

- After cutting use green onions immediately because they will oxidize and lose flavor
- Store green onions in a plastic bag refrigerated for up to two weeks



LEEKS

IN SEASON: SPRING & SUMMER

Native to the Mediterranean, leeks are the mild-flavored members of the onion family. Leeks possess a bright white cylindrical stalk and long overlapping green leaves. Different leek varieties come into season year round, but generally leeks are harvested in autumn.

Leek varieties that are more potent in flavor are harvested in spring when they are also are sweet and tender. The wild leek, known as a ramp, a relative of the leek is harvested in spring. Ramps possess a very strong onion flavor.



MEDICINAL QUALITIES

- Leeks are a source of vitamins A, C and a generous amount of K
- Leeks provide iron
- Leeks provide lutein and zeaxanthin

SELECTION GUIDELINES

- Select the smallest leeks available
- Make sure the leek stems are pale green or white in color
- Choose leeks that have healthy looking crisp green tops
- Leek stalks should be firm with some flexibility and free of blemishes
- Avoid selecting leeks that have dry, dark colored roots
- Avoid leeks that are wrinkled or have wilted leaf tops

PREPARATION GUIDELINES

- Rinse leeks under cold running water because grit often lodges between the layers of the leaves
- Cut leeks in half lengthwise, leaving the root ends intact for cooking whole
- Rinse again if necessary after cutting
- Trim away the roots and dark green tops before cooking
- Use gentle cooking methods for leeks to preserve their delicate texture and flavor
- Leeks are used in French cuisine for quiches and soufflés
- Leeks add flavor to soups, stews, salads, egg dishes, potatoes and grains
- Leeks are used in pasta, pizza toppings and casserole dishes
- Leeks can be grilled, roasted or sautéed as an accompaniment to fish and poultry
- Cooked leeks can be served cold
- Young leeks harvested as shoots are used raw for garnish

STORAGE GUIDELINES

- Store leeks refrigerated in a plastic bag for up to five days

The Cruciferous Crew

AKA: BRASSICAS
(BROCCOLI, CAULIFLOWER, BRUSSELS SPROUTS)

ROAST, STEAM OR STIR-FRY

These sturdy veggies roast, steam, or stir-fry beautifully and bring satisfying crunch or tenderness. High heat caramelizes edges for a sweet, nutty flavor; a quick steam keeps them bright and crisp. Finish with lemon, olive oil, or grated cheese.



BROCCOLI & GAI LAN

IN SEASON: WINTER

Broccoli and its Asian cousin gai lan are close relatives of cauliflower. Broccoli originated in the Mediterranean and originated as a form of wild cabbage that eventually evolved to develop buds rather than large leaves. Broccoli has compact deep green florets and firm stalks and has a distinct mild nutty flavor.

The most common kind of broccoli is the emerald green variety with tightly clustered tiny buds atop thick stalks. It was brought by Italian immigrants to England and then arrived in North America in the 1700s. Broccoli is in peak season during autumn through early spring, even though it is readily available all year.

Chinese gai lan has a broccoli-like stalk but it is topped with thick, flat green leaves instead of florets. It appears in the markets from summer to autumn. Leaves, stems and flowers can all be eaten.

MEDICINAL QUALITIES

- Broccoli is a good source of fiber
- Potassium, calcium, magnesium and phosphorus are contained in broccoli
- Broccoli contains good levels of phytonutrients including beta-carotene and lutein
- Broccoli is an excellent source of a family of anti-cancer phytochemicals called isothiocyanates
- A single cup of broccoli has as much calcium as a cup of milk
- Broccoli is especially rich in vitamins A and C, plus folate

SELECTION GUIDELINES

- Select broccoli that has a dome of tightly bunched florets that are dark green or purplish in color
- Do not select broccoli that has loosely packed or spreading florets
- Avoid selecting broccoli that shows signs of yellowing on their florets.
- When choosing broccoli, make sure stalks are firm and look fresh with healthy green leaves.

PREPARATION GUIDELINES

- Gai lan can be prepared in many ways and is stir-fried, added to soups or shaved and served raw in salads
- Avoid broccoli that have dried, tough stems that are more white than green
- Peel or trim away any tough portions on the bottom of the stalks and any leaves that may be discolored
- Use a sharp paring knife to separate the head into smaller, bite size florets
- Broccoli is commonly cooked and pureed to make creamy soups
- Broccoli may be slow roasted with olive oil and spices to accompany fish, poultry and meat dishes
- Broccoli florets are served raw or lightly blanched for vegetable platters
- Broccoli is incorporated into salads, grain and/or pasta dishes
- Steamed or lightly sautéed, broccoli is a favored side dish
- In Asian cuisine, broccoli is stir-fried with other vegetables and meats
- Broccoli adds texture and flavor to creamy casseroles and quiches

STORAGE GUIDELINES

- Store broccoli in a plastic bag refrigerated for up to five days

BRUSSELS SPROUTS

IN SEASON: FALL & WINTER

Brussels sprouts resemble miniature green cabbages that grow as small buds with layered leaf heads that grow along thick stalks of a plant related to wild cabbage.

Brussels sprouts get their name from the capital of Belgium—Brussels—where they were first cultivated then spread throughout Europe and North America. They grow best in cooler coastal regions and are in peak season from autumn through mid-winter.

MEDICINAL QUALITIES

- High in vitamin C
- High in vitamin K

SELECTION GUIDELINES

- The heads of Brussels sprouts may be sold on the stalk or removed and sold loose
- Choose Brussels sprouts with bright green leaves clustered tightly into compact heads
- Avoid Brussels sprouts with wilted or yellow colored leaves
- Fresh Brussels sprouts have stem ends that are pale in color and feel moist

PREPARATION GUIDELINES

- When preparing Brussels sprouts, rinse and dry heads thoroughly and snap away any damaged or brown colored leaves from outside and trim stem ends
- Large Brussels sprouts can be halved or quartered to shorten the cooking time and ensure even cooking
- Use a paring knife to cut a shallow X in the stem end before cooking so that the densely packed heads cook at the same rate
- Roast Brussels sprouts with olive oil, onions, garlic, fresh herbs and spices
- Nuts, dried berries and pork products like bacon add depth of flavor to Brussels sprouts
- Brussels sprouts may accompany meat, poultry and fish dishes
- Brussels sprouts may be used in pasta, pizza, soup and casseroles
- Brussels sprouts may be sliced or shredded for coleslaw or salad
- Individual leaves of Brussels sprouts can be sautéed
- Hot cooking methods for Brussels sprouts also include boiling, steaming, braising

STORAGE GUIDELINES

- Store Brussels sprouts in a plastic bag and refrigerate for up to four days



CABBAGE

IN SEASON: FALL & WINTER

Cabbage may have originated from the leafy wild mustard plant that grew centuries ago on the Mediterranean coast. It grows year round but peaks during autumn and early winter. Cabbages usually have a tight head of smooth or wrinkled leaves that grow around a central core. There are at least 100 different varieties of cabbage.

Green cabbage has smooth, pale green leaves. Savoy cabbage has wrinkled leaves with a crunchy texture that works well in coleslaws and salads. Napa cabbage (also called Chinese or celery cabbage) has an elongated shape with wide, flat white stems and wrinkled, pale yellow-green leaves. Bok choy has crisp white stalks and rounded, dark green leaves. Red cabbage is similar to green cabbage, but its deep reddish-purple color comes from growing in acidic soil; it has a faint peppery taste and thicker outer leaves, which allow longer storage.

MEDICINAL QUALITIES

- Cabbages contain a high percentage of dietary fiber and are great sources of vitamin K and C and Iron

SELECTION GUIDELINES

- Choose cabbage with tightly formed heads and smooth or wrinkled leaves depending on the specific variety
- Select cabbage that is heavy, firm to the touch and vibrant in color
- Avoid green cabbage that appears white (loss of natural pigment indicates it was stored too long)
- The stem end of fresh cabbage has no cracks around the base

PREPARATION GUIDELINES

- Discard wilted outer leaves and remove the cabbage's tough core before cooking
- The tough leaves of cabbage are sliced or shredded with a sharp knife, mandoline or food processor
- Use fresh cabbage as soon as possible; it loses freshness and nutrient value after being harvested
- For centuries, Europeans have pickled green cabbage as sauerkraut
- Asians have pickled green cabbage for kimchi
- Cabbages are favored for pickling because it is cheap to preserve and can last throughout long winters
- Cabbage is also boiled or steamed and then stuffed with savory fillings such as beef or pork, vegetables, herbs and grains like barley or rice
- Cabbage can also be chopped or shredded and added into a variety of

- soups such as the Vietnamese noodle soup, pho or the Russian cabbage soup, shchi
- Cabbage is braised until sweet and tender to accompany dishes with fish, pork, game or sausage
- In German cuisine, red cabbage is often braised with red wine vinegar and apples and paired with cooked meat and dumplings called spaetzle
- Cabbage is often incorporated into fillings for Asian dumplings
- Cabbage adds depth of flavor and texture when stir-fried with other meat, fish and vegetables
- Bok Choy is commonly stir-fried with ginger and garlic and can be served with a chili, black bean or hoisin sauce
- Both green and red cabbage tossed with mayonnaise or different dressings to make sweet or spicy coleslaw
- Cabbages are used in a variety of colorful salads
- Cabbage is also used for garnishing tacos or Thai noodle dishes like pad Thai
- Cooked red cabbage leaves oxidize and turn a pale blue color due to heat so add a small amount of vinegar or lemon juice, or use acidic ingredients such as apples or wine, during cooking to retain the vibrant red color

STORAGE GUIDELINES

- Store whole heads of green and red cabbage in the refrigerator for up to two weeks
- Loose-leaved savoy and Chinese cabbage varieties can be stored for five or six days
- The older cabbage gets the stronger the flavor and odor it produces
- Consume raw cabbage within three or four days



CAULIFLOWER

IN SEASON: FALL & WINTER

Cauliflower, with its compact, creamy white florets and firm enclosed green leaves originated in Asia Minor and was cultivated by the ancient Romans around 600 B.C. Special varieties of cauliflower have yellow, purple and even brown florets and the Romanesco cauliflower from Italy has pointed florets arranged in a geometric pattern.

Cauliflower has a mild nutty flavor and edible inner leaves. It is in season during late summer and autumn but can thrive during early winter.



MEDICINAL QUALITIES

- Cauliflower is an excellent source of potassium
- It also has high amounts of vitamin C
- The pungent smell and flavor of cauliflower is due to glucosinolates—sulfur-containing compounds that activate the body's detoxification system
- It is believed that the glucosinolates in cauliflower play a role in preventing various types of cancer

SELECTION GUIDELINES

- Select cauliflower that is firm to the touch and has a dome of tightly bunched florets
- Do not select cauliflower that has loosely packed or spreading florets
- Choose heads of cauliflower that have florets with even coloration
- Make sure cauliflower leaves appear fresh with a healthy green color and florets that are free of brown spots

PREPARATION GUIDELINES

- Use a sharp pairing knife to separate the head into smaller, bite-sized florets
- Add a few drops of lemon juice to water used to cook cauliflower to retain color
- Cauliflower is cooked and pureed to make creamy soups
- It is slow roasted with olive oil and spices to accompany fish, poultry and meat dishes
- The florets are ideal raw or lightly blanched for vegetable platters and are incorporated into salads, grain or pasta dishes
- Cauliflower is commonly used in Indian cuisine for adding texture and flavor to curries and vegetarian side dishes like aloo gobi (spiced cauliflower and potatoes)
- Cauliflower is a great addition to creamy casseroles and quiche

STORAGE GUIDELINES

- Store cauliflower in a plastic bag and refrigerate for up to five days

RAPINI

IN SEASON: FALL & WINTER

Rapini, also known as broccoli raab or Italian broccoli, is closely related to both mustard and turnip plants. Italian immigrants introduced it into the United States in the 1920s. It has long slender stalks resembling turnip greens, tender frilled leaves and flower buds that look like small florets of broccoli.

The taste is mildly bitter with hints of sweet mustard. Rapini is in season during the cool-weather months of autumn and winter.



MEDICINAL QUALITIES

- Rapini is a good source of vitamins A, C and K
- Rapini is high in potassium and calcium
- It is an excellent source of fiber

SELECTION GUIDELINES

- Fresh rapini has bright green florets and healthy looking leaves
- Tiny yellow flowers just beginning to open on the florets indicate freshness
- Rapini that is wilted, discolored or has fully-bloomed florets is not fresh
- Choose stalks that are firm and slightly flexible to the touch

PREPARATION GUIDELINES

- Trim away ends of stems and any wilted leaves before cooking
- If stems are particularly thick and tough, use a vegetable peeler to trim

- Rapini can be steamed, braised or blanched in a small amount of water before further cooking to help reduce its bitter flavor
- Rapini adds flavor and color to pasta, pizza, grain and egg dishes
- Rapini is sautéed with olive oil, garlic and red pepper flakes as a side dish for fish, poultry, sausage and meat dishes
- The Italian antipasto (appetizer) known as bruschetta—or grilled bread topped with flavorful ingredients—may include rapini
- Rapini may be used as a base for pasta sauces and soups
- Within Asian cuisine, rapini is stir-fried with garlic and ginger or with oyster or black bean sauces
- Rapini is excellent cooked and chilled in salads or baked into casseroles

STORAGE GUIDELINES

- Store rapini in a plastic bag and refrigerate for up to three days

Over- friendly Veg

AKA: ROOTS & TUBERS

**BAKE, ROAST
MASH OR SHAVE**

Beets, carrots, radishes, and potatoes shine when roasted—just toss with oil, salt, and pepper and bake until tender. They're also great boiled and mashed, or shaved raw for crunch. Tip: cut everything to similar sizes for even cooking.



BEETS

IN SEASON: SUMMER & FALL

Beets are root vegetables favored for their vibrant colors, sizes, sweet and slightly earthy flavor. Although available year-round, these roots thrive in cool climate areas and are in peak season during late summer and autumn.

There are three main varieties, red, gold and Chioggia (an Italian heirloom beet with candy cane striped flesh). Sugar beets were bred to have high sugar content in Austria—as an alternative to sugar cane as a source for the sweet substance.



MEDICINAL QUALITIES

- Beets are a good source of vitamin C
- Beets are a good source of dietary fiber
- There is a good amount of potassium in beets
- Beets are rich in folate (folic acid)
- Also, beets are a good source of magnesium

SELECTION GUIDELINES

- Look for beet roots that are firm, smooth skinned and free of bruises
- When selecting beets with greens attached, choose greens that look fresh, not dry
- Avoid selecting beet greens that are wilted or colored brown

PREPARATION GUIDELINES

- Remove stems from beet greens and wash thoroughly
- When boiling beets, make sure to leave roughly one inch of the stem and root end intact in order to prevent beet juice from bleeding into the water
- Beets are best cooked whole, peeled and then sliced, chopped or mashed
- Beetroots typically have a deep ruby red color and a tender texture when cooked
- Beets can be enjoyed roasted, steamed, boiled and raw
- These root vegetables add sweet flavor to soups, salads, pastas, savory fritters, eggs and grain dishes
- Beets are excellent roasted and caramelized with other root vegetables such as carrots, parsnips, turnips and rutabagas

- Beets are commonly paired with salty cheeses like feta or goat cheese, nuts, aromatic herbs and citrus fruits in salads
- Beets add flavor and color to relishes
- Beets can be pureed into creamy dips
- A soup that originated in the Ukraine became popular in Eastern and Central Europe is known as borscht; beets are the main ingredient along with potatoes, onions, cabbage and dill
- Beet greens are sautéed or wilted and used in soups or pastas and as a side dish for meat and poultry dishes
- For decades, beets have been used for canning and pickling because of their high nutritional value
- Beets are also used for juicing because of their health benefits

STORAGE GUIDELINES

- Remove the green tops off beets before storing the root vegetable
- Store beets and beet greens separately in plastic bags in the refrigerator for up to five days

CARROTS

IN SEASON: WINTER & SPRING

These colorful root vegetables are favored for their crisp texture and naturally sweet flavor. Close relatives to parsley, carrots can be grown year-round, but are sweetest in flavor during early winter through spring.

Multicolored (red, purple, yellow, white) carrots can be found at farmers' markets in spring. These colored roots get their unique color as a result of growing conditions: temperature, soil type, water, number of daylight hours. Multicolored carrots have been around since ancient times and can be substituted in any recipe that calls for carrots.

There are several carrot varieties: Imperator (orange, long, tapered), Nantes (delicate, deep orange, cylindrical), Chantenay (short, cone-shaped, often harvested early for "baby" carrots), Bambina (small, finger-shaped), Pointed Horn (small, finger-shaped), and Bolero (cigar-shaped).



MEDICINAL QUALITIES

- Carrots are a good source of vitamins A, K and C
- Carrots are also a good source of dietary fiber
- There is potassium in carrots

SELECTION GUIDELINES

- When selecting carrots, look for roots that have smooth skin, are firm to the touch, and are brightly colored
- Avoid carrots that have cracks
- Do not choose carrots that are green near the stem
- When selecting carrots with their greens, choose fresh leaves

PREPARATION GUIDELINES

- When preparing carrots, make sure to scrub the roots under cold running water with a vegetable brush to remove any dirt remaining on the outside skin.
- Young and tender carrots can be cooked unpeeled, while larger, more mature carrots should be peeled before cooking.
- Trim the stems and tough ends off of carrots before cooking.
- When removing the green tops off carrots, remember to leave roughly 1 inch of greens in order to preserve moisture for storage.
- Carrots can be roasted, boiled, sautéed, steamed, grilled, stir-fried, left raw
- Carrots may be braised or simmered in hearty soups, stews, curries, purees and sauces

- Carrots add flavor and texture to casseroles, meat pies, frittatas, savory fritters, grain and pasta dishes
- Carrots are excellent when sautéed with other root vegetables such as parsnips, turnips and rutabagas
- Carrots can be glazed with brown sugar, honey and butter
- Carrots roasted with different aromatic vegetables, fruits and nuts are great side dishes
- Carrots can be shredded or pureed into a creamy texture and used as a filling for baked goods such as muffins, cake, soufflés and quick breads
- Carrot mash with orange juice and zest makes a side dish and can be prepared the same way as mashed potatoes to accompany poultry, meat and fish entrees
- Carrots are enjoyed raw as a snack with different flavored dips and spreads
- Grated raw carrots can be used in salads and on sandwiches
- Moroccan carrot salad incorporates boiled carrots with lemon juice, olive oil and different herbs and spices
- For decades, carrots have been used for canning and pickling because of their high nutritional value
- Carrots are used as ingredients in Asian salads, sushi, noodle, rice and stir-fry dishes
- Carrots are also used for juicing because of their health benefits

STORAGE GUIDELINES

- Store carrots in a plastic bag in the refrigerator for up to two weeks

CELERY ROOT

IN SEASON: FALL & SPRING

Celery root is considered a tuber despite being a variety of celery. It is a large, round, knobby, gnarled edible root. Also known as celeriac, it is favored for its dense ivory flesh and nutty, earthy flavor that resembles celery. Celery root is in peak season from early autumn through early spring.



MEDICINAL QUALITIES

- Celery root is rich in vitamin C
- Celery root contains calcium
- Celery root is a good source of fiber
- Celery root also contains potassium
- Celery root is used in Chinese medicine to reduce high blood pressure
- Phytochemicals in celery root—phthalides—help reduce blood pressure

SELECTION GUIDELINES

- Look for roots that are firm, medium in size and free of blemishes
- Celery roots that have tangled ends or green stalks still attached are great for selection
- Choose roots that are heavy for their size and free of soft spots
- Celery root's attached greens should look fresh, not dry

PREPARATION GUIDELINES

- Scrub the roots under cold running water with a vegetable brush to remove dirt
- Trim the root ends off
- With a paring knife or vegetable peeler remove the thick skin and brown areas from the surface
- Celery root can be prepped using a food processor, mandoline, grater or sharp chef's knife
- Cook peeled and cut celery root immediately in order to avoid oxidation and discoloration of the root vegetable
- Celery root can be tossed with lemon juice to prevent browning
- Celery root is popular in French cuisine, especially the side dish céleri rémoulade
- Celery root can be roasted until soft and incorporated into sweet gratins and purees for fish, poultry and meat dishes
- Celery root can be shredded or finely julienned and mixed with different citrus juices, parsley leaves and bitter greens to create salads
- Celery root can be boiled and mashed with potatoes for a side dish
- Celery root is used in soups, casseroles, fritters and pasta dishes

STORAGE GUIDELINES

- Remove the green tops off the celery root before storing the root vegetable
- Store celery root in a plastic bag in the refrigerator for up to five days

JICAMA

IN SEASON: LATE FALL THROUGH SPRING

Jicama is a tuber that is called yam bean in parts of Asia. Jicama originated in Central America. It spread by the Spanish to the Philippines from where it spread throughout Asia.

There is only one variety but it comes in a range of sizes. It has smooth, tan skin and a crisp and juicy flesh. Jicama is in season fall through spring and it has an ivory-white flesh that has a similar consistency to that of a water chestnut.

MEDICINAL QUALITIES

- Jicama is high in vitamins A and C
- Jicama is a good source of the minerals calcium, iron, and phosphorus
- Jicama can help lower cholesterol levels in the blood and is a good source of fiber
- Jicama has a high water content and has a moisturizing effect for the body

SELECTION GUIDELINES

- Select jicama with smooth, tight and silky skins that feel heavy and dense for their size
- Avoid jicama with blemished or dull skins which indicate that the interior flesh is starchy, fibrous and tasteless

PREPARATION GUIDELINES

- Peel jicama's skin and fibrous flesh with a paring knife
- Jicama can be prepared ahead of serving because it won't discolor like other types of tubers
- Jicama is used in salads due to its sweet, refreshing flavor and crunchy texture
- Jicama can be sliced, baked and served with dips
- Jicama can be added to spring rolls, noodle dishes and salsas
- Jicama is cut into sticks and served raw on vegetable platters
- Jicama may be incorporated into grain dishes, pasta dishes and stir-fries
- Add jicama to braises and soups
- Served jicama steamed with a selection of other vegetables
- Jicama absorbs flavor well without losing its characteristic crunch

STORAGE GUIDELINES

- Store jicama in the refrigerator for up to 2 weeks. Do not store jicama in plastic as they need air to circulate around them in order to stay fresh.

PARSNIPS

IN SEASON: FALL & WINTER

Parsnips are root vegetables favored for their ivory color, sweet and slightly earthy flavor. They resemble their cousin the carrot. Parsnips have a tough, starchy texture that softens during the cooking process. Food historians believe parsnips came to North America from Europe by the pilgrims.

Parsnips thrive in cool climate areas and are in peak season during the winter months when cold weather converts their starches to sugar. Although they are considered a winter vegetable, parsnips are often removed early from the ground in spring and can have a sweeter flavor compared to parsnips cultivated in winter. As a result of their dense texture, parsnips have a long shelf life and today are available year round.



MEDICINAL QUALITIES

- Parsnips also contain vitamin K, E, C
- Parsnips are a good source of potassium and folate
- Parsnips are a good source of manganese

SELECTION GUIDELINES

- Look for roots that are firm, pale ivory in color and free of blemishes
- Choose parsnips that are small to medium in size
- Avoid large parsnips because they have a hard, fibrous core that must be removed before cooking
- Choose parsnips with greens that look fresh and not dried out

PREPARATION GUIDELINES

- Make sure to scrub these roots with a vegetable brush to remove dirt from the outer skin
- Young and tender parsnips can be cooked unpeeled
- Tougher, more mature parsnips should be peeled before cooking
- Cook peeled and cut parsnips immediately to avoid oxidation and discoloration of the root vegetable
- Parsnips can be tossed with lemon juice to prevent browning
- Parsnips are favored in hearty soups, vegetable purees, casseroles, stews and pasta dishes
- Parsnips are excellent roasted with other root vegetables such as carrots, turnips and rutabagas

- Roasted and pureed parsnips are often combined with cauliflower and potatoes to create flavorful au-gratin (a dish topped with seasoned breadcrumbs, cheese, eggs or butter and baked until brown) and savory pancakes
- Parsnips can be glazed with brown sugar and butter
- Parsnips can be roasted with different fruits and nuts
- Parsnips can be pureed and used as a filling for baked goods such as muffins and quick breads
- Parsnip mash is a favored side dish and can be prepared the same way as mashed potatoes to accompany poultry, meat and fish entrees

STORAGE GUIDELINES

- Make sure to remove the green tops off parsnips before storing the root vegetable
- Store parsnips in a plastic bag in the refrigerator for up to one month

RADISHES

IN SEASON: FALL & WINTER

Radish roots have vibrant color and a sharp, peppery flavor. Members of the mustard family, they thrive in cool climates. Food historians trace radishes back thousands of years to China; from there they spread to Japan—where daikon became a staple—and appear in ancient Egyptian writings predating the pyramids. The Romans carried them across Europe, they reached England in the 1500s, and British settlers later brought them to America. Small, tender radishes peak in spring and early summer, while larger varieties reach their peak later in summer or autumn. Left longer in the soil, radishes develop a spicier bite.

Common varieties include red (bright red and round), Icicle (long, thin, and white), Easter Egg (vibrant purple, pink, white, and lavender), French Breakfast (elongated roots that fade from red to white and are abundant in spring), black (dark-skinned with a pungent flavor), watermelon (pale green skin with pinkish-red flesh), and daikon (long, white, with a green hue at the stem end).



MEDICINAL QUALITIES

- Over the centuries, radishes have been used to help ease indigestion and constipation
- The ancient Greeks valued radishes so much that gold replicas were made to honor Apollo, the overseer of medicine
- In the Middle Ages, radishes were even thought to help cure insanity
- Radishes are sources of both potassium and folate
- Radishes are an excellent source of dietary fiber
- Radishes contain vitamin C

SELECTION GUIDELINES

- Look for roots that are firm to the touch, smooth skinned and free of blemishes
- Radishes with greens that look fresh, not dry, are the best choice

PREPARATION GUIDELINES

- Scrub the roots under cold running water with a vegetable brush to remove dirt from the outside skin
- Trim both radish ends when preparing to cook
- To serve radishes raw, leave an inch of the green stem intact as a nice color garnish and to grasp
- Radishes do not need to be peeled
- Radishes gain crispness when submerged into a bowl of ice water and refrigerated for a few hours
- Radish greens are edible raw or cooked
- Radishes add texture and flavor to fresh

salads, soups and grain dishes

- Radishes are excellent mixed with olive oil and herbs and roasted, grilled or sautéed with other root vegetables such as carrots, turnips and rutabagas
- Radishes are enjoyed raw as a snack with different flavored dips and cheese spreads
- Radishes are used raw in salads and sandwiches
- Radishes are eaten to cleanse the palate
- Radishes may be dipped into salt and served with buttered bread
- Radishes have been made into chutneys or pickled because of their high nutritional value
- Radish greens are cooked in curries and stews and make a great substitute for spinach
- Radishes pickled with red onions or hot peppers are a spicy garnish for Mexican dishes like pozole or tacos
- In Oaxaca, Mexico, locals celebrate La Noche de Rabanos on December 23rd—a festival known as the Night of the Radishes
- Radishes are ingredients of Asian salads, sushi, noodle, rice and stir-fry dishes
- Daikon radish cakes or lo bak gou, are made with grated radish, Chinese sausage, dried shrimp and spring onions and served with chili sauce

STORAGE GUIDELINES

- Remove the green tops off washed radishes before storing
- Store small radishes in a plastic bag in the refrigerator for up to one week and large radishes for up to two weeks

POTATOES

IN SEASON: SPRING & SUMMER

Potatoes are tubers—enlarged underground stems—that store energy as starch. Native to South America and part of the nightshade family (along with tomatoes and eggplants), they're available year-round, though waxy varieties and "new" potatoes are most common in spring and early summer.

Here's how to tell the main types apart: Waxy potatoes have moist, dense, low-starch flesh with a sweet flavor and creamy texture; they come in many shapes and colors and are great for boiling. New potatoes, red-skinned potatoes, and fingerlings are waxy. Starchy potatoes are dry, low in sugar, and high in starch; they're ideal for baking, mashing, and frying and are typically large and oval with dry, reddish-brown skins—the Russet Burbank from Idaho is the best-known example. All-purpose potatoes are bred to hold their shape when cooked and work well in most recipes.

In general, mature potatoes lean starchy, while earlier harvests tend to be waxier.

MEDICINAL QUALITIES

- Potatoes are a good source of vitamin B6 and contain a high level of vitamin C
- Potatoes are a good source of niacin, iodine, folic acid, copper and magnesium
- Most of potato's nutritional value is stored in or just under the skin

SELECTION GUIDELINES

- Choose potatoes that are not blemished, wrinkled, tinged with green or cracked
- Avoid selecting potatoes that feel soft, spongy or have discoloration
- Avoid purchasing potatoes that are sprouting—a sign they have been stored for too long

PREPARATION GUIDELINES

- Remove any green areas—they contain a toxic substance called solanine
- Greening of potatoes occurs through excessive exposure to light
- Cut off any buds (eyes) that are starting to sprout
- Scrub potatoes with a stiff brush under cold running water to remove dirt
- Use a vegetable peeler to remove skin and cut out the eyes with a paring knife or the tip of a peeler
- Potatoes are highly versatile and can be baked, roasted, boiled, steamed and fried
- Potatoes are mashed with butter and other flavorings or baked and roasted to be used as a side dish
- Potatoes are great in salads
- Potatoes can be incorporated into grain dishes

- Shredded or chopped potatoes are used for hash browns or home fries
- Potato pancakes or latkes are traditional in Israeli cuisine
- Russian potato dumplings are known as pierogi
- Boiled or roasted potatoes are the starch to pair with meat, poultry and fish dishes
- Potatoes are ideal for making pasta such as the Italian gnocchi
- Potatoes can be used as the main ingredients in bread
- Potatoes add texture and flavor to soups, stews and curries
- Potatoes are used to create rich in flavor casseroles, gratins and croquettes

STORAGE GUIDELINES

- Store potatoes in dark and dry conditions
- Avoid refrigeration, plastic bags and sunlight at all costs as these promote softening, sprouting, spoiling and an overall change in flavor
- Potatoes keep well for up to two weeks in a cool, dry, dark, and well-ventilated place
- As potatoes are left in storage their starch will slowly convert into sugar
- New potatoes and small, thin skinned varieties should not be stored but used quickly within a few days

SWEET POTATOES

IN SEASON: FALL & WINTER

Sweet potatoes have been around since prehistoric times. They are not actually related to potatoes but are a member of the morning glory family. Native to tropical parts of Central and South America sweet potatoes were one of the vegetables that Columbus took back to Europe.

Is a sweet potato a yam? No. True yams are very large root vegetables grown in Africa and Asia. They are rarely seen in the Western world even though the orange-fleshed sweet potatoes are often called yams. This is incorrect.

The Spanish embraced sweet potatoes, but their taste didn't catch on in other parts of Europe. The Portuguese transported it to their Asian and African colonies where it rapidly spread and today the sweet potato is an important staple in many countries in those regions. Sweet potatoes are also associated with the cooking of the Americas, the Pacific islands and the Caribbean nations.

There are several hundred different varieties of sweet potatoes. They have yellow-brown skin and yellow flesh or dark reddish or purplish skin and dark orange flesh. Sweet potatoes are in season autumn and winter though they are generally available year-round.

MEDICINAL QUALITIES

- Sweet potatoes are high in fiber
- Sweet potatoes are a rich source of antioxidants in the carotenoid family, especially beta-carotene
- Sweet potatoes are a good source of vitamin A
- Sweet potatoes offer sources of potassium and calcium
- Sweet potatoes contain phytochemicals like the anti-inflammatory quercetin

SELECTION GUIDELINES

- When choosing either yellow or orange-fleshed sweet potatoes, look for firm, smooth skin without blemishes or breaks
- Avoid sweet potatoes that show signs of mold

PREPARATION GUIDELINES

- Like starchy potatoes, sweet potatoes can be used either peeled or unpeeled
- Scrub unpeeled sweet potatoes thoroughly with a stiff brush under cold running water to remove dirt.
- Use a sharp vegetable peeler and cut out the eyes with a paring knife.
- Cut sweet potatoes just before cooking to prevent them from drying out
- Sweet potatoes can be substituted in many recipes for regular potatoes when roasting, baking, frying, stewing, or steaming
- Sweet potatoes are favored for their sweet flavor and creamy texture when cooked

STORAGE GUIDELINES

- Store sweet potatoes in a cool, dark, well ventilated place for up to one week
- For the best flavor and texture, avoid refrigerating sweet potatoes



Sauce & Grill Veg

AKA: NIGHTSHADES
(TOMATO, PEPPERS, EGGPLANT)

CHAR, ROAST BLISTER OR SLICE

Tomatoes, peppers, and eggplant love heat—think tomato sauces, blistered peppers, and grilled eggplant. Char or roast to bring out sweetness, then toss with olive oil, herbs, and a pinch of salt. Tip: salt eggplant slices for 10–15 minutes to reduce bitterness.



TOMATOES

IN SEASON: LATE SUMMER & FALL

Fruit or vegetable? To a botanist, tomatoes are fruit; to a cook, they're vegetables—so think of them as fruit-vegetables. Native to western South America and Central America, tomatoes reached Europe in the early 1500s and were first grown as ornamentals rather than food. Italy later embraced and cultivated them, but tomato sauce wasn't paired with pasta until the mid-1700s, and tomatoes didn't become widely popular until the late 1800s. The French nicknamed them *pommes d'amour* ("love apples") for their supposed aphrodisiac qualities. In 1897, Joseph Campbell's condensed tomato soup helped make tomatoes a household staple across the United States.

Tomatoes have a sweet-acidic flavor and a fragrant aroma. They vary in thickness, flesh density, juiciness, size, and seed count, which makes some types better for certain uses. Common varieties include cherry, beefsteak, green, golden or yellow, plum, and round (salad) tomatoes.

MEDICINAL QUALITIES

- Tomatoes have the potent antioxidant lycopene, which gives the red color and is believed to be an effective protector against the development of cancers (particularly prostate)
- Tomatoes are a good source of vitamins A and C, and in their raw state, vitamin E
- Tomatoes are rich in the minerals potassium, calcium and folic acid

SELECTION GUIDELINES

- Select tomatoes that are plump-looking and shiny
- Ripe tomatoes give slightly to pressure when pressed
- Tomatoes should feel heavy for their size and be free of soft spots, blemishes and bruises
- Select tomatoes that have a fragrant, sweet-acidic aroma coming from the stem end

PREPARATION GUIDELINES

- Certain recipes require skins and seeds to be removed from the tomato
- When removing tomato skins, remove the stem then use a sharp paring knife to cut a small cross-shape incision into the base of the tomato
- Then drop the tomato into a saucepan of boiling water for about 20 seconds
- Remove with a slotted spoon and immediately plunge into ice water
- This process of blanching removes the tomato skin

- Remove the tomato from the ice-water bath and start from the cross-shape incision and pull the skin away
- To seed tomatoes, cut them into quarters after they have been blanched
- Then gently nudge the seeds from the inner flesh with fingers
- Tomatoes are used raw in salads, grain, noodle dishes
- Tomatoes are mainstays in pastas, pizzas, stews, sauces and soups
- Tomatoes are used in stir-fries, egg dishes, casseroles and braised dishes
- Hollowed out tomato halves can be stuffed with meat, grains and/or vegetables and baked in the oven
- A popular tomato side dish in the American South is fried green tomatoes: sliced green tomatoes dipped in buttermilk, breaded in cornmeal and fried
- Tomatoes add flavor and texture to salsas, relishes and chutneys
- Tomatoes may be fresh, dried or canned
- Tomatoes are an ingredient in making stocks

STORAGE GUIDELINES

- Store tomatoes at cool room temperature, out of their packaging and definitely not in the refrigerator. It is best to use tomatoes within the first few days to fully enjoy freshness



TOMATILLO

IN SEASON: SUMMER THROUGH EARLY FALL

Tomatillos (toh-mah-TEE-yos) are small, tart, tomato-like fruits in the nightshade family, wrapped in a thin papery husk with a faintly sticky surface. Their bright, citrusy flavor is the backbone of salsa verde and many Mexican and Central American dishes.

In the U.S., tomatillos are widely available summer through early fall (imports make them nearly year-round).



MEDICINAL QUALITIES

- Naturally low in calories; a good source of vitamin C and fiber
- Provides vitamin K and potassium
- Contains plant antioxidants (including phenolics) that support overall health
- Pectin in the flesh helps gently thicken sauces and stews

SELECTION GUIDELINES

- Choose tomatillos that feel firm and heavy for size, with husks that are fresh, intact, and papery
- The fruit should mostly fill the husk; a little splitting at full ripeness is okay
- Color ranges from bright green (tart) to yellow-green (slightly sweeter)
- Avoid fruit that is shriveled, mushy, moldy, or with dry/brittle husks
- Do not confuse with unripe green tomatoes—tomatillos have a husk

PREPARATION GUIDELINES

- Remove husks and rinse well to wash off the natural sticky film
- Use raw (blended) for a bright, tangy salsa; add onion, cilantro, chilies, and lime
- Roast, broil, or griddle-char to deepen sweetness and add smoky notes for salsa verde, enchiladas verdes, chile verde, pozole verde, and stews
- Simmer to soften before blending for sauces; pectin will help sauces set
- Dice into salads, grain bowls, and tacos for acidity; balance with avocado, queso fresco, pork/chicken, beans, and corn

- Season with salt after blending or cooking; acidity becomes more pronounced as it cools

STORAGE GUIDELINES

- Store with husks on in a paper bag in the refrigerator crisper: up to 2–3 weeks
- Husked/rinsed fruit: pat dry, refrigerate in an airtight container with a paper towel: 5–7 days
- Room temperature (cool, dry, in husk): 2–3 days
- Cooked or raw tomatillos can be frozen (whole or halved) in a single layer, then bagged: up to 6 months
- Tip: roasted tomatillos freeze especially well for quick sauces.

SWEET/BELL PEPPERS

IN SEASON: LATE SUMMER

Sweet peppers are native to South America and have been cultivated for more than 9,000 years. They are cousins of chilies. Sweet peppers are referred to as bell peppers or capsicums and are known for being juicy and crisp in texture. Red and green peppers come from the same plant; red peppers stay on the vine longer and reach full maturity.

Peppers that are yellow, orange, purple and brown in color are different varieties that have the same sweet flavor as red peppers. Green peppers have a sharper vegetal flavor than the more colorful varieties. Sweet peppers peak from mid-late summer and are most flavorful during this time.

MEDICINAL QUALITIES

- Sweet peppers are an excellent source of folate
- Sweet peppers are a good source of vitamin K
- All colors of sweet peppers are good sources of potassium
- Green and red bell peppers are an excellent source of vitamin A
- All the colorful bell peppers are a good source of vitamin C
- Bell peppers are a good source of fiber
- Yellow and orange bell peppers are rich in carotenoids

SELECTION GUIDELINES

- Select sweet peppers that are vibrant in color and are firm to the touch
- Choose sweet peppers that have healthy looking smooth skin with no shriveled or soft areas
- Green tops of peppers should be smooth, plump and bright in color

PREPARATION GUIDELINES

- Trim away the stem, white membrane then remove the seeds before cooking peppers
- Sweet peppers are enjoyed raw as appetizers, salads and sandwiches
- Peppers, sautéed until silky in texture and sweet in flavor, are used to accompany fish, poultry, meat (especially sausage) and egg dishes
- Peppers are delicious sautéed and incorporated into pasta, pizza toppings and grain dishes
- Sautéed peppers may be pureed into flavorful soups and sauces
- Sweet peppers can be roasted or grilled for antipasti platters
- Sweet peppers baked whole with savory rice, meat, or vegetable stuffing inside make a hearty meal
- Bell peppers are used in Asian stir-fries and for filling fresh spring rolls and sushi

STORAGE GUIDELINES

- Green peppers will last up to a week in a plastic bag in the refrigerator
- Other colored peppers will last up to five days in a plastic bag in the refrigerator



CHILI PEPPERS

IN SEASON: LATE SUMMER

Chili peppers are native to Mexico and come in hundreds of varieties. They were consumed in Central America as early as 7500 B.C. and were introduced to South Asia in the 1500s. Today, India is the largest producer of chilies in the world. These peppers grow best in hot, tropical climates and come in a range of shapes, colors, and sizes. Chiles are in peak season from late summer through early autumn

Among the most popular mild varieties are:

- Anaheim—grass green
- Poblano—long, triangle shaped, dark green
- Banana—slender yellow

The most popular hot varieties of chilies:

- Fresno—long, tapered
- Habanero—bell shaped, reddish orange
- Serrano—bullet shaped
- Jalapeno—dark green, finger shaped

MEDICINAL QUALITIES

- Chilies are an excellent source of vitamin A, B-6, C and K, as well as Iron
- Chilies contain the chemical compound capsaicin used in medicinal ointments for pain relief

SELECTION GUIDELINES

- Select chilies that are firm to the touch and bright in color
- Avoid chilies that have wrinkled or blemished skin
- Avoid chilies that have soft spots or moldy stems
- Chilies that are smaller in shape with pointed ends typically are hotter in flavor
- Select dried chilies that have flexible pods rather than pods with a brittle texture
- Choose dried chilies that possess a uniform color and a wrinkled, twisted shape

PREPARATION GUIDELINES

- Wear thin plastic gloves while handling chilies to prevent skin irritation
- Remove the internal seeds and white membrane from chilies to reduce the intense heat factor
- Wash hands and kitchen tools/equipment immediately after prepping chilies
- Avoid contact with the face and eyes after prepping and take care to wash hands after removing gloves
- The heat from chilies can linger for hours after being processed so use extreme caution during and after working with them

- Chiles can be used fresh, dried or as a powder
- Capsaicin is what gives this unique vegetable-fruit its heat
- The flavor in chilies ranges from mild and sweet to hot and overpowering
- Mild flavored chilies are cooked and served whole or used for pickling and pureeing as condiments and sauces
- Hot chilies are favored for making fresh salsa and rich sauces that pack a punch
- Chilies are very versatile and add depth of flavor to a variety of international dishes
- Chiles are prevalent in South American/Latin cooking and are stuffed with cheese, meat, grains or vegetables and fried or baked
- Also, chilies are incorporated into enchiladas, tacos and soups
- Mild chilies are great for roasting over an open flame which gives them a charred exterior and deep smoky flavor
- Roasted chilies are sliced into thin ribbons or chopped and incorporated into shredded meat and poultry fillings, pastas and egg dishes
- In Asian cooking, chilies add depth of flavor and heat to noodle and rice dishes, soups and curries.
- In Creole cooking, chilies add additional heat to seafood, gumbo and jambalaya
- Chilies give spice to quick breads like cornbread or hushpuppies

STORAGE GUIDELINES

- Store all types of chilies in a plastic bag in the refrigerator for up to one week
- Dried chilies should be stored in an airtight container away from light and moisture
- Dried chilies will usually keep for up to six months

EGGPLANT

IN SEASON: LATE SUMMER & FALL

Eggplants are native to India and come in a variety of shapes, colors and sizes. Also referred to as aubergines, eggplants are utilized in a wide variety of international cuisines. Eggplants are in season during late summer.

The name of the most popular and commonly used eggplant today is the large purple-black Globe. It is used in Mediterranean cuisine. Both Chinese and Japanese eggplants are known for their long and thin shape, dense flesh and thin skin. These two Asian varieties of eggplant range in color from pink to lavender to dark purple. There are also specialty eggplant varieties that come in ivory and rose colors. Varieties like the green Thai eggplant have streaks of color running along the outside skin.



MEDICINAL QUALITIES

- Eggplant is an excellent source of dietary fiber
- The vitamins found in eggplant are A, and C
- Eggplants contain folate
- Eggplant has significant levels of potassium and magnesium
- Eggplant is an excellent source of the powerful antioxidant nasunin (nasunin discourages formation of new blood vessels to prevent cancerous tumors from creating a blood supply for growth)

SELECTION GUIDELINES

- Choose eggplants that have healthy looking green caps and stems
- Select eggplants that have firm flesh and smooth glossy skin
- Avoid selecting eggplants that have wrinkled, torn, bruised, or scarred skin
- Avoid eggplants that possess brown or dried caps

PREPARATION GUIDELINES

- Prepare eggplant right before cooking to avoid discoloration
- Salt eggplant slices before cooking to extract excess water and bitterness
- Salting is recommended right before frying eggplant because the raw spongy flesh soaks up oil rapidly
- Baby eggplants and Asian eggplant varieties can be cooked without salting or peeling because of their delicate flesh and seeds
- Large eggplants are ideal for roasting, broiling and grilling

- Large eggplants have a mild, slightly bitter flavor and spongy flesh when raw and a mild smoky flavor and soft flesh when cooked
- Eggplants are used in pasta and grain dishes, salads, soups, sauces and dips
- Globe eggplants are featured in international dishes like the Italian eggplant parmesan, Greek moussaka, or Provencale ratatouille
- Eggplant is roasted and pureed with garlic, lemon juice and tahini for the Middle Eastern dip baba ghanoush
- Eggplant is roasted and mashed with garlic and spiced tomato for the Indian vegetarian dish baingan bharta
- Globe eggplants are grilled with olive oil and herbs to be served as a burst of color and flavor on antipasto plates
- Asian eggplants are stir-fried and mixed with sweet and spicy sauces or braised and incorporated into curries
- Asian eggplants are battered and fried for tempura
- Asian eggplants are used for pickling

STORAGE GUIDELINES

- Eggplants can be stored in a plastic bag in the refrigerator for up to five days

Cactus

AKA: CACTACEAE
(NOPAL PADS & TUNAS)

GRILL IT, SLICE IT, DE-SPINE IT!

Nopales (cactus paddles) are bright and slightly tangy—think green bean meets okra. Trim edges, scrape off spines/glochids (gloves help), then slice and quickly sauté or grill. To reduce “slime,” blanch 1–2 minutes and drain, or dry-sear before adding oil. Great in eggs, tacos, and salads with lime. Prickly pears (tunas) are sweet and seedy; peel carefully, then cube or purée for aguas frescas, salsas, or jams. Tip: use tongs or a towel when handling and strain purées to catch seeds.



NOPALES (CACTUS PADDLES)

IN SEASON: SPRING THROUGH EARLY SUMMER

Nopales are the tender, flat pads of the prickly pear cactus. Young pads (4–8 in / 10–20 cm) are crisp-tart with a green-bean-meets-okra flavor and a pleasant mucilaginous (gel-like) quality that thickens as they cook. In the U.S. Southwest and Mexico they're harvested year-round, with peak season spring through early summer.

MEDICINAL QUALITIES

- Naturally low in calories; rich in fiber (including pectin) for digestive health
- Source of vitamin C, magnesium, calcium, and potassium
- Contains betalain pigments and other antioxidants
- Traditional use and some studies suggest post-meal blood-glucose benefits; this is not medical advice—people on glucose-lowering meds should consult a clinician

SELECTION GUIDELINES

- Choose young, tender pads: bright green, firm, and slightly flexible
- Look for pads with small, soft nodes and fewer spines/glochids
- Avoid overly large, thick, or wrinkled pads; skip any with soft spots, mold, or dry edges
- Pre-cleaned (de-spined) nopales are convenient—still inspect and rinse before use

PREPARATION GUIDELINES

- Safety first: Wear gloves and use tongs. Trim the edge/rim, then scrape away spines/glochids and nodes with a knife or vegetable scraper. Rinse well
- Cut into strips (rajas) or small dice
- To reduce mucilage ("slime"):
 - Dry-sear or grill over high heat until lightly charred; the gel cooks off quickly
 - Or simmer/blanch (5–10 min) in salted water with a slice of onion and a splash of vinegar or lime, then drain/rinse
- Pat dry before sautéing for best browning
- Use sautéed, grilled, or boiled in: huevos con nopales, tacos/quesadillas, salads with tomato & onion, salsas, stews (e.g., chile verde), and grain bowls
- Flavor partners: garlic, onion, chilies, cilantro, oregano, cumin, lime, tomato, queso fresco, eggs, pork, beans
- Raw: very thinly sliced after thorough de-spining; dress with lime and salt to tenderize

STORAGE GUIDELINES

- Unwashed, whole pads wrapped (or in a perforated bag) in the refrigerator crisper: up to 5–7 days
- Cleaned/cut nopales in an airtight container with a paper towel: 3–4 days refrigerated
- Cooked nopales: 3–5 days refrigerated
- For longer storage, blanch 2–3 min, drain well, pat dry, and freeze up to 6 months (best for cooked dishes after thawing)

PRICKLY PEAR

(CACTUS FRUIT / "TUNA")

IN SEASON: LATE SUMMER THROUGH EARLY FALL.

Prickly pears are the fruits of the prickly pear cactus, with colors from neon magenta and deep red to orange and yellow.

The flavor is melon-like with berry and floral notes; texture is juicy with hard edible seeds. Grown across Mexico and the U.S. Southwest (also Mediterranean climates), they're available much of the year with peak season late summer through early fall.

MEDICINAL QUALITIES

- Good source of vitamin C and magnesium; provides potassium and small amounts of calcium
- Rich in betalain pigments and flavonoids (antioxidant/anti-inflammatory activity)
- Contains soluble fiber/pectin
- Traditional use and some studies suggest post-meal blood-glucose benefits; not medical advice—people on glucose-lowering meds should check with a clinician

SELECTION GUIDELINES

- Choose fruit that is firm yet slightly yielding, heavy for size, and vividly colored
- Skin should be smooth and intact with no oozing, soft spots, mold, or major wrinkles
- Many markets sell "de-spined" fruit, but tiny hairlike glochids may remain—handle carefully
- Red/purple varieties tend to be sweeter; yellow/orange often a bit more floral

PREPARATION GUIDELINES

- Safety first: Wear gloves or use tongs. Briefly rub with a rough towel/vegetable brush under running water, or pass over a flame to remove residual glochids. Rinse well
- Trim both ends; make a shallow lengthwise slit and peel the thick skin away from the flesh
- Eat fresh (slice or cube), or juice and strain through a fine sieve or cheesecloth to remove seeds
- Uses: agua fresca, lemonade/limeade blends, vinaigrettes, syrups, jams/jellies, paletas, sorbets, cocktails, and glazes for poultry/pork
- Flavor partners: lime, orange, chili, mint, ginger, vanilla, coconut, cucumber, feta/queso fresco
- Note: The intense pigment stains—protect cutting boards and clothing

STORAGE GUIDELINES

- Whole, unpeeled fruit at cool room temp: 2–3 days
- Refrigerate whole fruit in a breathable bag: 1–2 weeks
- Peeled/sliced in an airtight container: 2–3 days refrigerated
- Juice or syrup freezes well in containers or ice-cube trays: up to 6 months



All The Squash

AKA: CUCURBITS
(SUMMER & WINTER SQUASH, PUMPKINS)

SCOOP, ROAST, SPICE OR SEASON

Summer squash and zucchini cook fast on the stove; winter squash and pumpkins become sweet and velvety when roasted. Scoop seeds, slice, and season—simple spices go a long way. Tip: save roasted squash for soups, bowls, or tacos later in the week.



ACORN & BUTTERNUT SQUASH

IN SEASON: FALL & WINTER

Acorn and butternut squash are two of the most common varieties of winter squash.

They were first cultivated thousands of years ago in Mexico and South America and are known for their tough, dense flesh, nutty flavor and hard skin.



MEDICINAL QUALITIES

- Acorn and butternut squash contain many vitamin A and C and E
- Both contain potassium and fiber
- Acorn and butternut squash are rich in potassium
- Fiber is also found in both acorn and butternut squash

SELECTION GUIDELINES

- Acorn squash have a dark-green ribbed shell and pale orange flesh
- Butternut squash are identified by the round bulb at their base and have pale beige skin and a rich orange-yellow flesh
- Select acorn and butternut squashes with smooth, unbroken shells
- When selecting acorn and butternut squash, look for squash that are firm to the touch and heavy for their size

PREPARATION GUIDELINES

- After opening either type of squash, scoop out and discard the seeds (they are not edible raw)
- After cooking these squash with their skins on, serve only the soft flesh and not the outside hard shell
- Also, if a recipe calls for the skins to be removed prior to cooking, use a vegetable peeler or paring knife
- Both acorn and butternut squash become sweet and creamy when cooked
- Both varieties are used in soups, pasta fillings, curries and long-cooked stews
- These squashes are incorporated into healthy grain dishes, salads and casseroles

- Chefs have become creative with these squash varieties and have used them in pasta sauce, pizza toppings, baked goods and sandwich spreads
- Acorn and butternut squash can be roasted or baked with oil or butter
- Cinnamon and nutmeg are spices used to accentuate cooked acorn and butternut squash
- Honey, brown sugar and maple syrup can be used to highlight the sweet flavors of acorn and butternut squash
- Acorn and butternut squash shells can be used as vessels for soup, stuffings and baked eggs

STORAGE GUIDELINES

- Once acorn and butternut squash are cut open, refrigerate and store in a plastic bag for up to four days
- Both acorn and butternut squash have a hard shell that allows them to be stored for several months
- Store acorn and butternut squash in a cool and dark place and make sure they are free of any cuts or bruises that could cause deterioration

CHAYOTE (CUCURBITS)

IN SEASON: FALL THROUGH SPRING

Chayote (*Sechium edule*)—also called mirliton, chocho, or vegetable pear—is a light-green, pear-shaped squash with crisp, pale flesh and a mild flavor (think cucumber + zucchini). Skin may be smooth or lightly spined; the flat white seed is edible and slightly nutty. Grown in warm regions (Mexico, Central America; in the U.S., mainly California, Florida, and the Southwest). It's available year-round, with peak supply fall through spring.



MEDICINAL QUALITIES

- Provides vitamin C, folate, potassium, and manganese
- A source of fiber and plant antioxidants (polyphenols)
- High water content supports hydration

SELECTION GUIDELINES

- Choose fruit that feels firm and heavy for its size with fresh, unbroken skin
- Color ranges pale to medium green; a little surface wrinkling is fine, but avoid soft spots, cracks, or mold
- Smaller chayotes are typically more tender with thinner skin and milder flavor
- Spiny types are normal—handle carefully; spines should be pliable, not dry and brittle

PREPARATION GUIDELINES

- Rinse well. If spiny or thick-skinned, peel; otherwise the skin can be eaten
- The seed is edible—slice and cook with the flesh, or remove for stuffing
- Chayote exudes a natural sticky sap when peeled—wear gloves or peel under running water to avoid tackiness
- Enjoy raw (matchsticks in salads/slaws with lime), or sauté, stir-fry, steam, roast, braise, or stuff and bake
- Cooks quickly (5–10 min until crisp-tender); great in soups, curries, and stews because it holds shape
- Flavor partners: garlic, onion, chilies, citrus, cilantro, epazote, tomatoes, seafood, pork, beans, corn
- Salt lightly after cutting to draw moisture for crisper slaws; pat dry before cooking for better browning

STORAGE GUIDELINES

- Refrigerate unwashed in a perforated or loosely closed bag in the crisper: 2–3 weeks
- At room temperature (cool, dry spot): up to 3–5 days
- Cut chayote in an airtight container with a paper towel: 3–5 days refrigerated
- For longer storage, blanch pieces 2–3 minutes, chill, pat dry, and freeze up to 3 months (best used in cooked dishes after thawing)

PUMPKINS

IN SEASON: LATE FALL & WINTER

The pumpkin is the most recognizable winter squash in North America and is a member of the gourd family. In season from late autumn to early winter, pumpkins have either a round or oblong shape. The common varieties of pumpkin have a distinct deep orange color and a hard shell that contains ridges from the top to the base of the squash.

Pumpkins also come in a variety of colors ranging from pale ivory, pink, yellow, orange-red, red, and blue—but all have orange flesh on the inside with seeds that are edible when cooked.



MEDICINAL QUALITIES

- Pumpkin is rich in vitamin A
- Pumpkin contains vitamin C
- One cup of chopped raw pumpkin has 30 calories
- Vitamin K is found in pumpkin
- Pumpkin has small amounts of most of the B vitamins
- Pumpkin contains folate
- The bright orange color of pumpkin indicates a high antioxidant content
- Pumpkin offers lutein
- Pumpkin is a good source of beta carotene
- Pumpkin has high potassium content
- The fiber found in pumpkin helps regulate the body's digestive system

SELECTION GUIDELINES

- Know and choose pumpkin varieties that have been cultivated specifically for cooking
- The large, hollow pumpkins used for carving jack-o-lanterns are not recommended for eating
- Sugar pumpkins are the variety used for cooking
- Sugar pumpkins include the small orange sugar pie, the pale beige deeply ribbed cheese pumpkin, the flat and vibrant red French pumpkin, and the round heirloom winter luxury pumpkin
- Look for sugar pumpkins that feel solid and heavy for their size
- Pumpkins that are lighter in weight tend to indicate that they have aged and have dried out
- Choose pumpkins that have hard shells without cracks or soft spots

PREPARATION GUIDELINES

- Pumpkin is used in baked goods and pureed for pies, cakes, tarts, bread pudding and quick breads like muffins and cookies
- Cooked pumpkin pairs well with clove, nutmeg and cinnamon
- Pumpkin's flavor agrees with the herbs rosemary, sage and thyme
- Pumpkin is used for flavoring pancakes, waffles, granola and hot coffee
- Pumpkin can be roasted and braised with oil or butter as a side dish
- Pumpkin is used as an addition to pasta, grain dishes, stews, curries, tagines and casseroles
- This creamy and sweet winter squash can be used for filling ravioli
- Pureed pumpkin may be used in soups and sauces
- Pumpkin seeds may be washed in salted water then dried or combined with various herbs and spices and roasted
- This squash can be hollowed out and used as a serving vessel

STORAGE GUIDELINES

- Pumpkins may be stored for a long period of time—up to a month—without spoiling
- Store pumpkins in a dry, cool place and make sure they are free of any cuts or bruises
- Once a pumpkin is cut open, refrigerate and wrap it in plastic for up to four days

SPAGHETTI SQUASH

IN SEASON: LATE SUMMER THROUGH WINTER

This winter squash is considered to be a wonderful alternative to pasta noodles, and it holds a lot more nutritive value than its flour based look-alike food. Its shell ranges in color from pale ivory to rich yellowish-orange. Oblong in shape, it can grow up to a foot long and be half as wide.

A relative newcomer to the family of squashes, spaghetti squash was developed in China in the late 1800s as fodder. The Burpee Seed Company discovered it and sold it to American farmers and gardeners as “vegetable spaghetti.”

MEDICINAL QUALITIES

- A cup of spaghetti squash strands has 42 calories
- Spaghetti squash supplies vitamins A, B6 and C
- High in fiber, this squash also contains many seeds (the seeds are edible when roasted)

SELECTION GUIDELINES

- Watch for a firm, dry rind with a stem attached
- Avoid squash with cracks or soft spots
- Choose a spaghetti squash that is heavy for its size

PREPARATION GUIDELINES

- Rinse the squash before cutting in half lengthwise
- Remove seeds with a spoon
- Bake or boil until tender then rake the strands from the shell with a fork

STORAGE GUIDELINES

- Store whole squash in a cool, dry area for up to three months
- Refrigerate cooked spaghetti squash for two to three days



YELLOW SQUASH

IN SEASON: SUMMER

Yellow squash are available during the hot summer months and are known for their mild flavor and tender flesh. They were first cultivated thousands of years ago in Mexico and South America and are native to the New World. Yellow squash are shaped like a long cylinder, similar to zucchini, but with bright lemon coloring.

There is a crookneck type of yellow squash that has a bumpy exterior with skin the color of pale butter. Yellow squash is a staple in international cuisines and can be prepared using a wide range of cooking methods.



MEDICINAL QUALITIES

- Yellow squash is a good source of vitamin C
- Yellow squash contains iron and folate
- Yellow squash has the antioxidant beta carotene
- Yellow squash contains lutein

SELECTION GUIDELINES

- Look for yellow squash with a bright yellow color, feel heavy for their size and are firm
- Choose yellow squash that have smooth skin with no significant blemishes
- Select small yellow squash for tender and seedless flesh
- Yellow squash that is firm to the touch indicates age and seed content

PREPARATION GUIDELINES

- Rinse yellow squash in running water
- Slice the ends off before cooking
- The soft, delicate skin can be left on for cooking or eating raw
- Small yellow squash are roasted whole
- Large yellow squash may be cut into pieces and grilled or sautéed
- Both grilling and roasting cooking methods help bring out the natural sweetness in yellow squash
- Yellow squash are used in pasta dishes or sautéed fresh to accompany meat, poultry and fish dishes
- Yellow squash can be used to top pizza, sliced into salads or grain dishes
- Yellow squash can be used as a filling for tamales, baked goods and casseroles

- Yellow squash is used for soups and stews
- Yellow squash is breaded and fried for Japanese tempura
- The yellow squashes have such a mild flavor that they pair well with an array of seasonings
- Yellow squash can be substituted in recipes that call for zucchini.
- The skin and seeds of yellow squash are edible because they both have a soft and moist consistency
- The round pattypan squash, a cousin to the yellow squashes, has a scalloped edge and is commonly referred to as the scallop squash
- Pattypan squash can be prepared similar to any methods used for yellow squashes

STORAGE GUIDELINES

- Store yellow squash in the refrigerator for up to three days in a tightly sealed plastic bag

ZUCCHINI

IN SEASON: SUMMER

This green summer squash variety has a soft and thin skin with a delicate flesh. Zucchini has its origins in Central America, but the modern day zucchini was first cultivated in Italy in the 1800s.

Zucchini peak in summer and grow on vines that produce large, golden flowers that are also edible.



MEDICINAL QUALITIES

- Zucchini is high in fiber and water
- Zucchini is rich in vitamins C and A
- Zucchini is rich in potassium, and magnesium
- The water, fiber and low calorie content zucchini make this squash a low-energy food (which controls appetite)
- Potassium, an electrolyte, is essential for maintaining your body's fluid balance and helps normalize blood pressure.
- Zucchini also has significant levels of magnesium

SELECTION GUIDELINES

- When selecting zucchini, look for squash that are dark green in color, firm to the touch, and heavy for their size
- Refrain from choosing zucchini that are oversized because they are often bitter and soft

PREPARATION GUIDELINES

- Rinse zucchini in running water
- Trim the ends off before slicing, chopping or shredding zucchini
- Zucchini's skin can be left on for eating because of its thin, delicate nature
- For large zucchini, salt the slices to remove excess moisture before cooking
- Zucchini's mild flavor pairs well with a variety of seasonings
- Zucchini is used in cuisines from Mexico to Southern Europe, to the Middle East and Northern Asia

- Zucchini blossoms used in Mediterranean cuisine are filled with different cheeses, fried or cut into ribbons and used for soups, pastas, grain dishes, pizza toppings and in egg dishes
- The new varieties of zucchini are golden in color or round in shape (known as ronde de nice) and are used in both savory and sweet dishes
- Zucchini are ideal when sautéed, roasted, stuffed and baked, or grilled
- Zucchini is used in soups, stews, sauces and curries
- Zucchini holds up well to quick steaming, frying or gentle slow cooking which helps bring out its natural sweet flavor
- Zucchini adds great texture and moisture to baked goods because of its high water content
- This squash is baked into a variety of quick breads, pancakes and cakes
- Raw zucchini can be sliced or grated to use in salads, appetizers and antipasto plates

STORAGE GUIDELINES

- Wrap zucchini in paper towels and refrigerate in a sealed plastic bag in order to keep the squash fresh. Typically, zucchini that is refrigerated can last for 3 days before cold damage occurs.
- It is important to use zucchini blossoms within 1 day of purchasing due to their delicate and highly perishable nature

Crunch and Picnic Veg

AKA: CUCURBITS & GRASSES
(CUCUMBERS, MELONS, CORN)

BOIL, GRILL,
SLICE OR SHAVE

These are fresh, juicy, and perfect for quick snacks and salads. Cucumbers add crunch, melons bring sweetness, and corn can be boiled, grilled, or shaved into salads. Tip: chill melons before slicing for peak refreshment.



CUCUMBER

IN SEASON: SUMMER & FALL

Cucumbers are best known for their refreshing juicy and mild flavor. These long green vegetables are in season during early to mid summer and a range of specialty varieties appear at farmers' markets throughout summer months such as the Japanese cucumber with its straight and narrow shape and the egg shaped lemon cucumber.

Cucumbers originated in India and are grouped into two main categories: slicing (for fresh use) and pickling (for preserving).

The delicate and smoothly textured English cucumber, also known as hothouse cucumbers, are great for eating fresh. Persian cucumbers are used interchangeably with English cucumbers. They are both are thin-skinned, can be served unpeeled, and are nearly seedless. English cucumbers are often a foot long in size, while Persian cucumbers are only about 5-6 inches.

The Kirby and Liberty varieties are used for pickling and have a sweet flavor with crunchy texture. Gherkins are small, savory pickled cucumbers and Cornichons are smaller gherkins.

MEDICINAL QUALITIES

- The cucumber has a high water content
- Cucumbers are good sources of vitamins A and C
- Cucumbers contain substantial levels of magnesium and potassium
- Cucumbers and their extract are used in spa products such as lotion and shampoo because of their cooling, soothing qualities that help relieve skin inflammation
- Sliced cucumbers reduce and relieve under-eye swelling
- Cucumbers contain the chemical compound silica which benefits skin, blood vessel and bone health
- Cucumber skin and seeds contains dietary fiber

SELECTION GUIDELINES

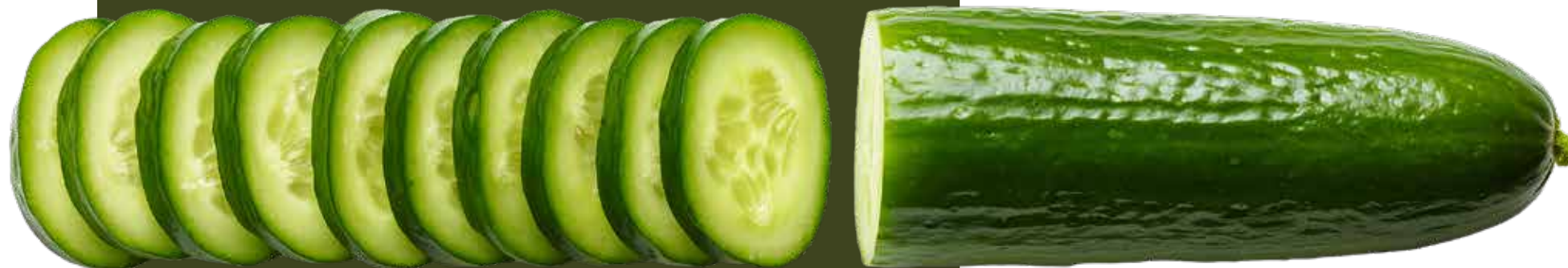
- Select cucumbers that are dark green in color and have a slender shape with firm flesh
- Choose cucumbers that have healthy looking skin with no wrinkled or yellowed areas

PREPARATION GUIDELINES

- Young and tender fleshed cucumbers do not require seeding or peeling before being used
- Large cucumbers can be seeded by cutting them in half lengthwise and then scraping out the seedy pulp with the tip of a spoon
- For a crisper texture, toss diced cucumbers with salt and let them stand in a colander to extract excess liquid
- Cucumbers provide color and texture to dips, sauces and salsas
- Cucumbers add flavor and crunch to sandwiches, chilled soups, grain dishes, hors d'oeuvres and sushi
- The Greek appetizer tzatziki is a yogurt-based sauce with cucumber, garlic and lemon
- Sunomono salad is a lightly pickled cucumber salad in Japanese cuisine that commonly accompanies sushi and bento box meals
- Cucumbers are used to flavor fish and seafood dishes
- Cucumbers can be incorporated into the foil cooking method for steaming, baking, or grilling fish

STORAGE GUIDELINES

- Cucumbers can be stored in the refrigerator for up to five days by wrapping each cucumber in paper towels and storing them in a plastic bag



MUSKMELONS AND WATERMELONS

IN SEASON: SUMMER & FALL

Muskmelons have protective rinds in shades from creamy white to deep green, with flesh that can be ivory, yellow, orange, or green. Most arrive at markets in summer, though some are harvested year-round. Melons fall into two families—muskmelons and watermelons—and their sweetness pairs well with salty, acidic foods. Muskmelons are native to Persia; they appear in Egyptian art (c. 2400 B.C.), were grown by the Greeks by 300 B.C., and reached the Americas with Columbus in the late 1400s. “Musk” comes from a Persian word for perfume; “melon” entered via French from Latin melopepo (“apple-shaped melon”). Common muskmelons include cantaloupe, honeydew, cassaba, Crenshaw, and Galia (a cantaloupe-like hybrid with pale green flesh). Watermelons range from small and round to oblong, with flesh from white-blush to yellow, pink, or deep red; they typically weigh 10–15 pounds but can exceed 100, and while many have seeds, seedless varieties exist.

MEDICINAL QUALITIES

- Watermelon has lycopene (protects against heart disease)
- Casaba melon has lots of B6 (reduces inflammation, helps metabolism)
- Cantaloupe rich in potassium
- Lots of vitamin A in the orange-fleshed melons

SELECTION GUIDELINES

- When selecting melons, pay close attention to the smell, feel, shape, and color of the fruit to determine whether fully ripe. Choose melons free of mold, deep blemishes, or overly soft areas
- Aroma and weight are the best indicators of fully ripe melons. Choose melons that are heavy for their size and exude a sweet aroma
- Properly ripened melons become slightly soft at the base of the stem

PREPARATION GUIDELINES

- To keep melons moist and fresh, peel and cut off slices only as needed
- Cut melon should immediately be refrigerated in an airtight container
- Remove melons from refrigerator about 30 minutes before serving. Melons taste sweeter when served at room temperature or slightly chilled
- When serving room temperature melon sprinkle lemon juice, chili powder, or salt on fruit to bring out the sweet flavors of the fruit
- A popular summertime pairing is watermelon with feta cheese and balsamic vinegar or cantaloupe wrapped in prosciutto

STORAGE GUIDELINES

- Typically melons can be stored at room temperature up to 3 days and once cut can be refrigerated for up to 1 week



CORN

IN SEASON: SUMMER

Corn, also known as maize, is an ancient crop that dates back to central Mexico at least 7,000 years ago. It descended from teosinte, a wild grass. Corn is credited with the Native Americans' evolution from a nomadic to an agrarian society. Corn eventually spread north to the southwestern U.S. and south to Peru.

Native Americans worshiped corn and believed it was a gift from their gods. They taught the early American settlers how to make corn into flour, cakes and soups. Columbus acquired corn from the Indians in the Americas and brought it back to Spain. From there it spread to Western Europe and throughout the rest of the world. Corn is now produced in every continent except Antarctica.

Corn is second only to rice in terms of worldwide agriculture. There are five main types of corn grown. Sweet corn is the most familiar variety, commonly eaten as corn on the cob. The kernels are yellow, white or a mixture of these two colors. Sweet corn kernels contain a greater proportion of sugar to starch than any other vegetable, but as soon as it is picked, the sugar in corn begins converting to starch, reducing its sweetness.

MEDICINAL QUALITIES

- Corn is a good source of folate
- Corn is a good source of fiber, phosphorus, vitamin C and magnesium
- Corn contains thiamin (vitamin B1)

SELECTION GUIDELINES

- Select cobs that feel and look moist and plump
- Kernels inside should be fat and shiny
- The silk of corn should be a little sticky, look glossy, be stiff and moist

PREPARATION GUIDELINES

- Strip away the layers of corn husk and the silk then rinse to remove
- To remove kernels, hold each ear upright on a cutting board and run a sharp knife down the ear as close to the core as possible
- Corn kernels can be cooked in boiling water for several minutes until tender and used in fritters, savory pancakes, creamed corn, soups, risottos, salads, salsas or tossed with butter and seasonings
- Enjoy corn on the cob by simmering the whole cob in lightly salted water until tender
- Corn can be grilled or baked until tender and flavorful
- Corn kernels are used in hush puppies, corn bread and corn chowder
- Corn kernels can be used in stews, rice and pasta dishes, curries and sauces
- Baby corn is a specially-bred type of corn and is good in Asian stir-fries and soups

STORAGE GUIDELINES

- Store corn in its husks in the refrigerator for two or three days only



Daily Fruit Bowl

AKA: TREE FRUIT
(POME & STONE)

SIMPLE, DELIGHTFUL
SNACKABLE

Apples, peaches, plums, and friends are easy snacks and great in oats, salads, or simple desserts. Ripen stone fruit on the counter; refrigerate once ripe to slow softening. A squeeze of lemon keeps cut fruit bright.



APPLES

IN SEASON: AUTUMN & EARLY WINTER

A sweet-to-tart flavor, thin skin and colors that range from pale yellow to deep red, apples have been symbols of knowledge, immortality and temptation. There are some 7,000 known apple varieties in the world (most are not readily available), which makes them the most common tree fruit in the world.

Sweet apples are best for eating raw as a snack or paired with aged cheese. Tart apples are ideal for making pies, cakes, pastries or applesauce. Most apples are harvested from autumn to early winter.

MEDICINAL QUALITIES

- Apples are rich in flavonoids, especially quercetin
- Apples contain many antioxidants
- Apples are high in soluble and insoluble fiber
- Apples have no cholesterol or fat
- Apples are a good source of vitamins A, C and K
- The saying “An apple a day keeps the doctor away” is well known for years because of the health benefits associated with apples
- Apples are packed with nutrients like calcium, magnesium, phosphorus and potassium

SELECTION GUIDELINES

- Apples with smooth skin, that are firm to the touch and free of bruises or blemishes, make the best choices
- Choose apples from the new harvest, grown locally, for best flavor and texture
- Apples sold in markets from cold storage tend to have less flavor
- Check the blossom end (bottom) of apples for fresh (not dry) leaves to indicate freshness

PREPARATION GUIDELINES

- Apples can be eaten with the peel on or off
- Use a vegetable peeler or small pairing knife to remove skin
- Apples are great for juice, sauce, apple butter, compotes, vinegar and cider
- It is important to remember that apples continue to ripen at room temperature
- The flesh of cut apples oxidizes when exposed to air and turns brown
- Coat the cut apple pieces with citrus juice in order to prevent oxidation

STORAGE GUIDELINES

- Store uncut apples in a heavy paper bag away from onions and potatoes in the refrigerator for one week or up to two months
- Cut apples should be used as soon as possible

APRICOT

IN SEASON: SUMMER

Apricots were first cultivated thousands of years ago in China, where they still grow wild. Apricot varieties range in color from yellow to golden orange and may have rosy patches of skin. This fruit has a slightly fuzzy skin and a dry flesh that can be tart and almond flavored.

Apricots have small pits that are easy to remove and their thin soft skin may be left on for most recipes. They have been bred with plums to create a fruit called an aprium. It has skin covered with scant fuzz and tastes like a sweeter apricot with a hint of plum.



MEDICINAL QUALITIES

- Apricots are rich in antioxidants
- Apricots are high in fiber
- Dried apricots have more iron content than fresh ones
- Apricots are a great source of vitamins A and C
- Apricots are a source of beta-carotene, potassium and tryptophan
- Fresh apricots have no cholesterol or sodium and are great snacks for a weight loss diet

SELECTION GUIDELINES

- Purchase apricots grown locally to allow the fruit to have a longer ripening time and extra care during handling and transport
- Apricots that have been shipped long distances were picked while still green which causes the fruit to have a soft, mealy texture with very little flavor depth
- Apricots have a short season of availability and peak in early to midsummer
- Select apricots that have a deep golden color and a sweet fragrance. Avoid purchasing apricots that are hard because they will never ripen fully once harvested
- Choose apricots that are soft enough to give when gently pressed

PREPARATION GUIDELINES

- Apricots can be eaten with their skins on or peeled off
- To remove skins, submerge apricots in a hot water bath and then shock fruit in an ice bath in order to loosen the skin
- Then peel fruit with a paring knife
- Apricot slices or halves may top pastries or be placed between cake layers
- Apricots may be pureed into sauces or used to make compotes, relishes and glazes
- Apricots are sold fresh, frozen, canned or dried
- Apricots are delicious in salads, grain dishes and savory meat and poultry dishes that have been roasted or stewed
- The Blenheim Apricot is highly regarded among bakers and jam makers for its sweet-tart flavor and honeysuckle aroma
- In Mediterranean cuisine, apricots are used with couscous and desserts containing yogurt and honey

STORAGE GUIDELINES

- Handle ripe apricots gently and eat before the fruit becomes bruised
- Light green apricots may become sweeter if stored in a paper bag at room temperature for one to two days

CHERRIES

IN SEASON: SPRING & SUMMER

Cherries have many shades of red from light crimson to deep reddish black. Cherries are in season from late spring to early summer and are best enjoyed right after being harvested.

This small and vibrantly flavored fruit can be hard and crisp or soft and juicy in texture. They are grouped into two main categories: sweet and sour.

The sweet varieties are:

Bing, Lambert, Royal Anne, Ranier

The sour varieties are:

Montmorency, Morello

Sweet cherries are great for eating fresh. The more delicately flavored Royal Anne and Rainier are golden in color with a tinge of pink and red. Sour cherries tend to be smaller and softer and are prized for their flavor and texture in pies, jams, chocolates and dessert sauces.

MEDICINAL QUALITIES

- Cherries are packed full of antioxidants, specifically anthocyanins
- Antioxidants in cherries may reduce cancer and heart disease risk
- Sour cherries contain the highest level of antioxidants
- Cherries contain melatonin, a natural substance that regulates sleep cycles
- Cherries contain boron (good for bone health when consumed with magnesium and calcium)
- Cherries are made up of more than 75 percent water
- Cherries are loaded with soluble fiber

SELECTION GUIDELINES

- Select cherries that are plump, large for their size and have smooth skin
- Choose cherries that have stems still attached
- Avoid cherries with shriveled stems
- Avoid cherries with flesh that is bruised, mushy or soft with a wet, sticky feel

PREPARATION GUIDELINES

- Keep stems on cherries until ready to use; removing stems brings quick spoilage
- Wash cherries under cold running water just before using them to prevent mold
- Use a sharp paring knife or cherry pitter to remove cherry pits
- Cherries are sold fresh, canned or dried
- Cherries are used in pies, pastries, quick breads, syrups, relishes, compotes, salads, juices and stuffings
- Cherries are used to accompany savory dishes containing poultry, pork, venison, and game birds like duck and pheasant

STORAGE GUIDELINES

- Cherries should be used as soon as possible after being purchased
- Cherries can be refrigerated up to five days in a shallow container covered with a clean cloth or paper towel

PEACHES & NECTARINES

IN SEASON: SUMMER & FALL

Peaches were first grown in China over 4,000 years ago and were introduced to the Western world via India and Persia where they were heavily cultivated. Today velvet-skinned peaches grow in the temperate regions of Asia, Europe and the United States. The flesh of both fruit ranges from white to creamy yellow, to yellow orange to a slight rose color. Peaches and nectarines with white flesh are more fragrant, sweeter in flavor and have juicier texture.

Peach seeds eventually found their way to the red clay soil of Georgia in the southern U.S. where this stone fruit thrived—Georgia is known as “Peach Country.”

Nectarines are traced back to ancient China and are grown from and grafted onto peach trees. Unlike peaches, nectarines have smooth skin but these two fruits are similar in shape, coloring and flavor.

Based on their stone seed or pit, these fruits are grouped into two categories: freestone and clingstone. Freestone peaches and nectarines have flesh that separates easily from the pit. If flesh clings to the pit, they are the clingstone variety. Freestone peaches and nectarines are more often used for cooking—they are much easier to handle and prepare than clingstone fruit. Peaches and nectarines are in season from early to mid-summer.

MEDICINAL QUALITIES

- Peaches and nectarines have high levels of vitamin A, C, E, K
- Both contain niacin
- Both contain potassium
- Both are high in antioxidants
- Both are low in calories and high in fiber
- Both are sources of iron

SELECTION GUIDELINES

- Peaches and nectarines that produce a flowery fragrance and are free of severe bruising and visible blemishes are good to select
- Avoid purchasing peaches and nectarines that have green tinges on their skins which indicates that it was picked too early and may never ripen properly
- Choose peaches and nectarines that are soft enough to give when gently pressed
- Ripe peaches and nectarines should be handled gently and eaten as soon as possible because the fruit can bruise easily

PREPARATION GUIDELINES

- When ready to cook or eat peaches and nectarines, rinse them under cold running water and use a paring knife to remove the pit from the center of the flesh
- The fruit can then be easily divided into sections using the same paring knife
- Both fruits can be used interchangeably in recipes because of their similar flavor and texture
- Peaches and nectarines may be fresh, canned, frozen or dried
- Peaches and nectarines are used for baking pies, cobblers and tarts
- These two fruits also make flavorful jams and compotes
- Peaches and nectarines may be poached or roasted to accompany salads and desserts
- Peach and nectarine puree is used in drinks
- Both fruits are excellent for juicing
- Make vibrant sauces with either fruit to accompany savory or sweet dishes
- Peach or nectarine juice can be used as a glaze
- Both fruits may be used as filling for poultry and meat products prior to roasting

STORAGE GUIDELINES

- Store peaches and nectarines at room temperature with their stems facing down
- If peaches and nectarines are ripe and very soft, refrigerate them in a plastic bag for four to five days



PERSIMMONS

IN SEASON: FALL THROUGH SPRING

Persimmon trees produce colorful light orange to deep orange-red lantern shaped fruit. Persimmons have a variety of species native to China and North America. Persimmon trees can reach up to 25 feet tall in semi-tropical climates and their peak season is from late October to late February.

Both Native Americans and European settlers ate *Diospyros virginiana*, the persimmon species native to North America. In the 19th century, Asian persimmons (kaki fruits) were introduced to America by Japan. The Asian species, *Diospyros kaki*, accounts for almost all commercial persimmon production today.

Persimmons have been categorized into astringent and non-astringent varieties. The two main types of Asian persimmons are the heart-shaped Hachiya (astringent) and the smaller rounder Fuyu (non-astringent).



MEDICINAL QUALITIES

- Persimmons are rich in potassium
- Persimmons are high in vitamins C and vitamin A
- Persimmons are respected for their high soluble fiber content

SELECTION GUIDELINES

- Select persimmons that are plump and heavy for their size and free of blemishes
- Avoid purchasing persimmons that have a hint of yellow
- Persimmon skin should be smooth and shiny and have stems that are fully intact
- Stems should be green and firm, not gray or brittle

PREPARATION GUIDELINES

- Hachiya persimmons should be ripened at room temperature while inverted on their caps until very soft, like overripe tomatoes
- Hachiyas must be peeled because of the skin's astringent flavor
- Though they require a long time to ripen, Hachiya persimmons produce a rich, sweet flavor and a soupy flesh that works deliciously in cakes and pies
- When Hachiya persimmons are fully ripe they can produce a hint of honey and pumpkin flavor
- The ripe inner flesh of Hachiya persimmons is used for pureeing and putting into quick breads, puddings, preserves and custards
- Hachiya and other varieties of astringent persimmons are dried to make the Japanese treat, hoshigaki
- Fuyu persimmons are unique because they

can be enjoyed while still firm, sliced and eaten with their skins still on, like apples

- The Fuyu is also known as the Japanese persimmon and is recognized as the national fruit of Japan
- Fuyu persimmons are known for their crisp and sweet flavor and smooth texture
- They pair well with salad greens such as spinach, frisée and endive for creating seasonal salads
- Fuyu persimmons may be dried
- Fresh sliced Fuyus make good snacks or smoothies
- Fuyu persimmons may be served with skin on or peeled for a softer texture
- If persimmons are too hard to use, place inside a paper bag with a banana or apple to hasten ripening

STORAGE GUIDELINES

- Fully ripe persimmons should be eaten right away
- Persimmons may be refrigerated in a plastic bag for up to two days
- Whole unripe Hachiya persimmons may be frozen for six to eight months

PLUMS

IN SEASON: MID-LATE SUMMER

There are hundreds of plum varieties that are available during the mid-late summer months. Ripe plums have a sweet, juicy, translucent flesh and a sour tasting skin that contrasts with their succulent flesh. Plums come in a variety of colors including bright green, golden yellow, and shades of pink, scarlet and purple.

The two best plums to be eaten raw are the red skinned, yellow-fleshed Santa Rosa or the Burbank. These two popular North American plums were named after the 19th century horticulturist, Luther Burbank, who developed over 100 different types of plums from original Japanese trees.

Smaller plums (Greengage, Mirabelle, Shiro—a yellow plum, Damson) are ideal for dessert recipes like tarts and crumbles. The small plums are good for jams and jellies. A fruit called a Pluot is a hybrid between a plum and an apricot. The Italian plum or prune plum has a deep purple color and oval shape and holds its shape and flavor well during the cooking and baking process.

MEDICINAL QUALITIES

- Plums contain vitamins A and K and significant levels of vitamin C
- Plums are a good source of potassium
- Plums contain magnesium
- Plums have high levels of fiber; as prunes (dried plums) they provide constipation relief

SELECTION GUIDELINES

- Select plums that are heavy for their size and have a smooth skin
- Avoid purchasing plums that have wrinkled skin or overly soft flesh
- Choose plums that give slightly when pressed on the bottom of the fruit
- Fresh plums are recognizable by a white powdery bloom on their peel

PREPARATION GUIDELINES

- Ripe plums can be eaten with their skins on or peeled off
- If plums are unripe and skin is hard to peel, plunge fruit into a hot water bath and then shock in cold water in order to slip off skins
- Plums are utilized in many countries for wines, liqueurs and cordials
- Plums are arranged into two categories: dessert and cooking
- Plums used for cooking generally are drier and more acidic
- Plums that are used in cooking are commonly stewed, poached, or roasted
- Both types of plums can be eaten raw or can be canned, frozen, pickled or dried
- Prunes are dried plums that resemble large black raisins
- Prunes are used in salads, grain dishes and savory meat dishes

STORAGE GUIDELINES

- Store fully ripe plums in a plastic bag in the refrigerator for three to five days
- Hard, unripe plums can be softened by placing fruit in a paper bag for a few days at room temperature



POMEGRANATES

IN SEASON: FALL THROUGH SPRING

Since ancient times, the pomegranate has been a symbol of fertility, health and eternal life. The pomegranate is native to Persia (modern day Iran) and they believe that the pomegranate was plucked from the tree of knowledge by Eve in the Garden of Eden, instead of an apple.

Egyptians used to bury their dead with pomegranates because they believed the fruit offered eternal life. Pomegranates are prevalent in Greek mythology and to this day Greeks break open a pomegranate as a tradition at wedding celebrations. The Chinese eat candied pomegranate seeds for good luck.

Pomegranates get their name from the Latin "seeded apple" and thrive successfully in Mediterranean climates especially in Europe and California. This exotic fruit is in season during autumn and winter months.



MEDICINAL QUALITIES

- The pomegranate is a nutrient dense fruit and rich in phytochemical compounds
- Pomegranates contain high levels of flavonoids and polyphenols
- Pomegranates also possess punicalagins, compounds that are only found in this unique fruit, that help lower cholesterol and blood pressure and help increase blood vessel health
- A glass of pomegranate juice has more antioxidants than red wine, green tea, blueberries and cranberries
- Pomegranate juice is thought to stimulate serotonin and estrogen receptors, which help reduce symptoms of depression and help strengthen bone density
- Seeds will sink, membrane bits and skin will float
- Skim off and discard the skin and membrane
- Rinse the seeds in cool water and place on paper towels to dry
- Both the juice and seeds are used to add depth of color and flavor to classical Mediterranean meat, grain and vegetable dishes
- Pomegranate seeds add crunch to salads and desserts
- The sweet and sour juice from pomegranates is used to brighten marinades, vinaigrettes, sauces, glazes and drinks
- Do not eat the bitter white sectional membrane or skin of a pomegranate
- Pomegranate molasses made with sugar and lemon juice is a staple in Middle Eastern cuisine

SELECTION GUIDELINES

- Look for large, firm and deep red colored fruit
- Select a pomegranate that boasts a plump shape and smooth peel
- Avoid pomegranates with dried, shrunken or brown skin
- Pomegranates that feel heavy for their size indicate the fruit has more juice

PREPARATION GUIDELINES

- Once split open, the leathery deep red skin reveals a honeycomb of gem-like seeds, each surrounded by juicy ruby red pulp
- The easiest way to separate seeds from the pomegranate is to slice off both ends then cut into sections
- Submerge each section in a bowl of water and flick the seeds apart from the yellow-white membrane

STORAGE GUIDELINES

- Store pomegranates at room temperature for 1 to 2 days or refrigerate in a plastic bag for up to 3 weeks

QUINCE

IN SEASON: FALL & WINTER

Quinces are relatives of the rose family and predate their close cousins, apples and pears, by many centuries. Among the ancient Greeks, quinces were used during weddings as a ritual offering to honor Aphrodite, the goddess of love.

Quinces are often referred to as golden apples because of their potent floral smell and bright golden-yellow color when fully mature. Raw quinces have a hard, dry, cream-colored flesh. As a result of having a strong sour flavor, quinces are never eaten raw. Once cooked, quinces soften, turn a deep rose-pink color, and become even more flowery in fragrance.

The quince tree is native to the rocky slopes and woodlands in southwest Asia, Turkey and Iran. It is grown for its attractive pale pink blossoms and other ornamental qualities. Like other tree fruits, quinces are in season during the autumn and winter months.



MEDICINAL QUALITIES

- The phytochemistry of quince is being studied for several medicinal uses
- In the Middle East, dried quince pits are used to treat sore throat symptoms and relieve coughs
- Quince pits are soaked in water to produce viscous material used as an alcohol-free cough syrup for children
- In Iran, quince is called beh and the seeds are used as a remedy for pneumonia and lung disease
- In parts of Afghanistan, quince seeds are boiled and ingested to combat pneumonia
- In Malta, a southern European country, quince jam is dissolved in boiling water to relieve intestinal discomfort

SELECTION GUIDELINES

- Look for large, smooth-skinned fruits that retain their pale, fuzzy coating and a flowery fragrance
- Avoid quinces with severe bruising or soft spots
- Select quinces before they ripen fully, while still quite firm and their skin is just beginning to turn from green to gold

PREPARATION GUIDELINES

- Do not wash off the delicate fuzzy coating on the surface of a quince until ready to use
- The hard flesh of a quince resists smaller knives; use a hefty cleaver to cut the fruit
- Remove the core and seeds of a quince if you do not plan to strain the fruit after cooking
- Quinces are paired with sweet ingredients to offset their sour and bitter taste
- Quince goes well with lamb, pork, poultry and game in slow-cooked stews and roasts
- Quince is used to make jams and jellies
- Quince is often paired with softer fruits because of its high-pectin content and gelling power
- In Iran, quince is used for making jams, known as morabba
- Extra syrup from quince jam is mixed with cold water and lime juice to make a sweet drink
- Quince is peeled, then roasted, baked or stewed
- When quinces are cooked down and reduced to a fruit paste, they are known as membrillo in Spain or cotognata in Italy
- Quince paste is thick and sweet so it pairs perfectly with hard sheep's milk cheese especially Manchego
- Quince is used in tarts, puddings, sandwiches and desserts

STORAGE GUIDELINES

- Store quinces at room temperature
- Once fruit ripens, refrigerate in a plastic bag for up to two weeks

Berries & Grapes

AKA: BERRIES
(AGGREGATE & TRUE) AND GRAPES

NO-PREP, LEVEL-UP HEROES

Fast, no-prep snacks that also level-up yogurt, pancakes, and salads. They're delicate—rinse just before eating and store dry to prevent spoilage.
Tip: freeze extras for smoothies or quick sorbets.



BERRY FAM

IN SEASON: TYPICALLY SUMMERTIME

Berries possess tiny edible seeds dispersed throughout their flesh, while other fruits have a single large pit or concentrations of seeds at their center.

In ancient times, berries were gathered in the wild. Now, in modern times berries are cultivated. They are hand picked during the harvest months of spring and summer when they are at their peak and are more mature and durable.

Berries are native to Europe, Asia, Africa and North and South America. They are also found throughout certain parts of Asia. Most varieties of berries grow on vines or canes (slender thorny stems), but many kinds of berries grow and flourish on bushes. Certain varieties of berries can be found fresh in multiple seasons while others are season-specific. For what berries lack in size, they make up in vibrant flavor, fragrance and juiciness.

MEDICINAL QUALITIES

- Berries are low in calories
- Berries are low on the glycemic index (sugar content measure helpful in managing diabetes)
- Blueberries are one of the world's most nutrition-packed foods
- Cranberries are helpful in fighting urinary tract infections
- Many types of berries are packed with flavinoids that help protect against cancer

SELECTION GUIDELINES

- Inspect berries for bruises, mold and over-ripening
- Once mold begins to grow on berries within a carton the entire batch quickly rots
- Inspect berry cartons for juice stains or leakage, an indication that the fruit was mishandled

PREPARATION GUIDELINES

- Wash berries under running water to remove excess dirt and small insects
- Wash berries at time of use
- Use berries soon after acquiring due to their delicate and perishable nature
- Berries are used in for purees, sauces and flavorings
- Berries are the main component in jams, jellies, compotes, smoothies and many desserts Berries are versatile and can be used in fresh, frozen or dried forms
- In winter months, dried berries are ideal for making stuffings, salads, breads and granola
- Empower Freedom 4 Youth chef trainee, you will learn the defining characteristics, correct storage method and seasonal availability of each berry variety

STORAGE GUIDELINES

- Consume berries within the first three days of purchase, although some berries may last up to a week if properly stored



VARIETY	CHARACTERISTICS	STORAGE	RIPE
BLUEBERRY	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Deep blue and purple in color with a dusty silver-blue bottom.• Can taste both tart and sweet.• Grows on low bushes.• Berries can be eaten fresh, frozen or dried.• Can be used for jams, baked goods, juices, salads, sauces, breakfast foods, vinegars.	Refrigerate in an airtight container for up to 1 week. Freeze for off-season use.	Late Summer
STRAWBERRY	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Vibrant red and glossy in color, heart shaped, has exterior seeds. Sweet in flavor.• Grows on plants that produce sprawling shoots or runners.• Eaten fresh, frozen or dried.• Can be used for desserts, preserves, purees, sauces, salads, juices, & breakfast foods.	Store ripe berries for 2-3 days in single layers between paper towels in an airtight container in refrigerator.	Late Spring Through Early Summer
RASPBERRY	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Vary in color from scarlet red, black, or white.• Tart in flavor and sweeter when fully ripe and eaten fresh or frozen.• Grows on thorny, rambling bushes called brambles and thrives in sunny fields and meadows across North America and Europe.• Can be used for baked goods, purees, sauces, juices, syrups, breakfast foods, salads, vinegar.	Use as soon as possible or refrigerate in single layers on paper towels in airtight container. Freeze for off-peak use.	Late Spring Through Late Summer
BLACKBERRY	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Midnight-hued and shiny in color.• Tart in flavor or sweet when fully ripe. •Can be eaten fresh or frozen.• Grows on thorny, rambling bushes called brambles and thrives in sunny fields and meadows across North America and Europe.• Can be used for baked goods, syrups, purees, sauces, juices, salads.	Plan to use as soon after purchasing as possible. Refrigerate in single layers on paper towels in airtight container.	Late Spring Through Late Summer
BOYSENBERRY	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Deep maroon and crimson in color, long in shape with large seeds.• Typically sweet in flavor, but tart when not fully ripe.• This berry is from a hybrid vine; it is a cross between European raspberry, common blackberry and loganberry.• Grows on bushes with thorny branches. Can be eaten fresh or frozen.• Used for jams, jellies, syrups, wine, baked goods, salads, sauces, breakfast foods.	Use as soon as possible or if needed refrigerate in an open container for a week. Freeze for off-season use.	Mid-summer
CRANBERRY	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Range from white blush, light red to deep scarlet in color.• Cranberries are shiny and firm in texture; dry and sour taste.• Grows on bushes in bogs or special beds, which are flooded in fall so the buoyant berries can be harvested.• Are typically cooked because they are extremely sour and can be used for relishes, sauces, jellies, desserts, baked goods.• Can be frozen or dried for use in salads, grains, stuffings, breads.	Store in a tightly covered container in the refrigerator or freeze	Late Fall Through Early Winter

VARIETY	CHARACTERISTICS	STORAGE	RIPE
MULBERRY	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Dark purple to black in color when fully ripe and produce a slightly musty aroma.• Mulberries have a sweet and sour flavor.• Grows on trees and are widespread in southern Europe, the Middle East, Northern Africa and the Indian subcontinent.• Can be used for wines, syrups, tarts, pies, jams, sherbet, tea, cordials.	Use as soon as possible because mulberries lose flavor quickly. When needed, refrigerate berries in an airtight container.	Mid-summer
GOOSEBERRY	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Range in color from green, golden, red, purple and white.• Can be smooth or fuzzy- skinned and some have paper husks still attached.• Grows on bushes and are native to Europe, northwestern Africa and western Asia.• Can be used in compotes, relishes, jams, jellies, pies, puddings, salads.	Can be refrigerated up to two weeks and will continue to soften and turn a deeper color. Once purple they are good for purees for one more week	Summer
ELDERBERRY	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Deep purple and black in color and sweet in flavor.• Grows on bushes and are native to temperate and subtropical regions of the world.• Berries are more widespread in the Northern Hemisphere. Their Southern Hemisphere occurrence is restricted to parts of Australia and South America.• Can be used for jams, jellies, wines, syrups, cordials.	Use as soon as possible or if needed refrigerate loosely in a shallow container for a week. Freeze for off-season use.	Mid-summer
CURRANT	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Range in color from vibrant red to black and white.• Typically glossy, translucent and taste tart. Red currants are generally sweetest in flavor.• Grows on bushes and prefer partial to full sunlight• Can grow in most types of soil.• Currants are native to Western Europe.• Used for jams, jellies, sauces, soups, baked goods, desserts.	Store fresh currants lightly covered in the refrigerator for roughly one week.	Mid-summer
HUCKLEBERRY	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Deep purple and blue in color.• Huckleberries are tart and seedy.• Grows on plants in damp acidic soil on the East & West coasts of the U.S.• Can be eaten fresh or frozen.• Used for jams, sauces, breakfast foods, desserts.	Store in a tightly covered container in the refrigerator for one week or freeze for future use.	Late-summer
GOJI BERRY	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Bright orange-red in color, also called the Wolfberry and has a tinge of tartness.• Grows on shrubs in temperate and subtropical regions of China, Mongolia, and in the Himalayas.• Goji berries have been eaten for generations in Asia for their medicinal qualities.• Goji berries can be eaten raw, cooked, or dried (like raisins) and are used in herbal teas, juices, soups, snacks, cereals, medicines.	Store dried goji berries in a cool, dark place away from heat, moisture, and sunlight.	Early to Mid-summer
CLOUDBERRY	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Amber (orange-red) in color and are similar in shape to raspberries. They have a sweet and sour apple flavor and are very seedy.• Cloudberries grow in swamp areas in the Artic on mountains, on plains, and by the sea.• Cloudberries are not commercially grown and are picked and enjoyed in the wild.• Cloudberries are popular in traditional Norwegian cooking and used for cloudberry cream, yoghurt, sauce.	Store fresh picked cloud-berries in a shallow container in the refrigerator and eat cook as soon as possible.	Mid-summer to Late Summer

GRAPES

IN SEASON: SUMMER & FALL

Grapevines are ancient plants that were cultivated by the Egyptians, Greeks and Romans. Grapes have been symbols of prosperity and fertility that have been incorporated into art and literature for centuries. They grow in tight clusters on leaf-covered vines. Technically berries, grapes have more than 50 varieties and have so many different uses that they are grouped separately.

Grapes are divided into two categories: American and European. Grapes are distinguished from each other by color (red or green) and for being seedless or having seeds.

Ranging in color from silver green to deep purplish black as a result of terroir. This French term describes the specific conditions of soil and climate in which grapes are cultivated. Most grape varieties are sweet and juicy and can be slightly tart.

Nearly 90 percent of grapes grown for the table belong to the European species *Vitis vinifera*. Depending on variety, grapes come to market from late spring through summer to early fall.

Grape varieties can be eaten fresh or used for making juices, jams, preserves and wine. Dried grapes, or raisins, are added to salads, rice and grain dishes. Fresh picked grapes are left to dry in the sun for approximately two weeks in order to become raisins. The drying process is completed with several days in a bin called a sweatbox before the raisins are washed, packed and shipped.

MEDICINAL QUALITIES

- Fresh grapes are about 80 percent water
- Raisins are 15 percent water and have a higher calorie count but a more concentrated
- nutritional value than fresh grapes
- Raisins are a top source of antioxidants
- Raisins are full of potassium
- Raisins and grapes contain dietary fiber
- Grapes contain no cholesterol or sodium and provide protein, calcium, and vitamin C. One major difference between red and green grapes is that red grapes have higher antioxidant levels contain trace amounts of the antioxidant resveratrol

SELECTION GUIDELINES

- Select grape bunches in colorful clusters, plump in shape and firm in consistency
- Avoid grape bunches that have mold, bruising or clusters that fall away from stems
- It is safe to purchase grapes that are covered in bloom, a naturally occurring powdery whitish substance

PREPARATION GUIDELINES

- Rinse grapes under running water to remove dirt, bloom or bugs
- Drain after rinsing and before eating or cooking
- Grapes can be used in flavoring chocolate and as a garnish for decorating breakfast dishes and cheese plates
- Raisins are found in meat and vegetable stews and tagines
- Raisins become plump after soaking in water to add to stuffing and breads
- Raisins are baked into quick breads, cookies and pastries.
- In Germany, a holiday bread of raisins and other dried fruits called Stollen is eaten around the holidays
- Italy has a similar holiday raisin bread called panettone
- Raisins appear in classic sauces that accompany sautéed fish, meat, poultry and vegetable dishes
- Raisins are incorporated into snacks like granola and trail mix
- Raisins are used in Mediterranean, Indian and East African cuisines because they offer a sweet concentration of flavor and texture

STORAGE GUIDELINES

- Grapes can be frozen
- Fresh grapes left out at room temperature will provide the most flavor
- Store red and green grapes in the refrigerator up to one week in a plastic bag



Citrus Corner

AKA: CITRUS
(ORANGES, LEMONS, GRAPEFRUIT)

JUICE, ZEST OR MARINADE

Oranges, lemons, and grapefruit add brightness to everything. Use the juice for dressings and marinades, and the zest for extra flavor without extra liquid. Tip: roll citrus on the counter before juicing to get more out.



LEMON

IN SEASON: WINTER & EARLY SPRING

Bright yellow and intensely aromatic, lemons (Eureka and Lisbon are common; Meyer is a sweeter, thin-skinned hybrid) are prized for tart juice and highly flavorful zest. In the U.S., lemons are grown mainly in California and Arizona; they're available year-round, with peak flavor from late fall through spring (Meyers peak winter-early spring).

MEDICINAL QUALITIES

- Excellent source of vitamin C
- Citrus flavonoids are antioxidant and anti-inflammatory
- Citric acid helps the body absorb iron from plant foods
- Pectin (in the pulp) adds soluble fiber
- Source of potassium; naturally low in calories and sodium

SELECTION GUIDELINES

- Choose fruit that feels heavy for its size, with smooth, glossy skin
- Thinner skins generally yield more juice; thick, bumpy skins yield more zest
- Avoid soft spots, shriveling, mold, or dull coloring
- For zesting, pick unblemished fruit and wash well

PREPARATION GUIDELINES

- Zest before juicing; avoid the bitter white pith
- For more juice, bring to room temp and roll on a hard surface; a 10–15s microwave softens membranes
- Use a reamer or press; strain seeds and pulp as needed
- Lemon brightens dressings, pan sauces, grains, seafood, and desserts; use to prevent browning of cut fruit/avocado
- Peel or zest can be cut into thin ribbons with a peeler or microplane for garnishes

STORAGE GUIDELINES

- Room temperature: up to 1 week
- Refrigerate in a breathable or lightly sealed bag: 3–4 weeks
- Cut lemons wrapped airtight: 3–4 days refrigerated
- Juice or zest can be frozen up to 6 months (ice-cube trays are handy)

LIME

IN SEASON: LATE SPRING THROUGH EARLY FALL

Limes deliver bright, floral acidity; Persian (Tahiti) limes are seedless and widely sold, while Key limes are smaller and more aromatic. U.S. supply is largely from California/Mexico and is best late spring through early fall, though available year-round.

MEDICINAL QUALITIES

- Excellent source of vitamin C
- Rich in citrus flavonoids and citric acid
- Provides small amounts of folate and potassium
- Low-calorie flavor booster that can reduce added salt

SELECTION GUIDELINES

- Color may range deep green to yellow-green; avoid hard, shriveled, or brown-spotted fruit
- Key limes often turn yellow when ripe—that's normal
- Thinner skins usually mean juicier fruit

PREPARATION GUIDELINES

- Limes tend to yield less juice than lemons—roll firmly and use a reamer/press to extract fully
- Strain juice to remove seeds and bitter pith
- Zest with a microplane; use a peeler to make lime-zest ribbons for cocktails and desserts
- Essential for Latin American and Southeast Asian dishes, salsas, marinades, grains, and noodle salads
- Add lime at the end of cooking to keep flavors bright; use zest in rubs where juice would thin the mixture

STORAGE GUIDELINES

- Room temperature: 3–5 days
- Refrigerate in a bag: 2–4 weeks
- Cut limes wrapped airtight: 3–4 days refrigerated
- Juice/zest: freeze up to 6 months



ORANGE

IN SEASON: LATE FALL & SPRING

Oranges range from seedless navels (easy-peel, aromatic, best for eating) to Valencias (excellent for juice). Blood oranges offer berry-like notes and striking color. In the U.S., navels peak late fall through spring; Valencias peak spring through summer.



MEDICINAL QUALITIES

- Excellent source of vitamin C
- Good source of fiber (especially membranes) and folate
- Provides potassium and carotenoids (like beta-cryptoxanthin)
- Citrus flavonoids contribute antioxidant activity

SELECTION GUIDELINES

- Choose fruit that is heavy for size, fragrant, and firm with smooth skin
- Color can vary; a little “re-greening” on ripe fruit is normal
- Avoid soft spots, mold at the stem, or spongy, lightweight fruit (dehydrated)
- For zesting, pick unblemished oranges

PREPARATION GUIDELINES

- Zest first; then juice or supreme (segment) for salads and salsas
- Roll at room temp before juicing; use a press/reamer for best yield
- Use a peeler to make wide orange-peel ribbons for garnishes and infusions
- Great in vinaigrettes, pan sauces, grain bowls, baked goods, and marmalades
- Add juice off heat for freshness; reduce to make syrups or glazes

STORAGE GUIDELINES

- Room temperature: several days to 1 week
- Refrigerate in a bag/crisper: 2–3 weeks
- Peeled segments in an airtight container: 3–4 days refrigerated
- Juice/zest: freeze up to 6 months

TANGERINE

IN SEASON: LATE FALL & SPRING

Tangerines (a common name for mandarins) are smaller, easy-peel, and typically sweeter and less acidic than oranges. Varieties roll in from late fall through spring: satsumas (very early and delicate), clementines (winter), and tangelos/minneolas (mid-winter to early spring).



MEDICINAL QUALITIES

- Excellent source of vitamin C
- Provides carotenoids (notably beta-cryptoxanthin) and flavonoids
- Some soluble fiber in the membranes; naturally low in calories
- Small amounts of folate and potassium

SELECTION GUIDELINES

- Look for fruit that feels heavy for size with a lively aroma
- Skin should be bright and mostly smooth; some looseness ("puffy" skin) is normal for easy-peel types
- Avoid overly soft spots, dull skin, or dryness/lightweight fruit
- Tangelos often have a "neck" at the stem—this is typical

PREPARATION GUIDELINES

- Peel easily; enjoy out-of-hand or separate into segments for salads, bowls, and desserts
- Zest gently (skins can be delicate) and avoid excess pith
- Add tangerine segments/juice at the end of cooking to preserve their delicate flavor
- Use zest in rubs; juice in quick pan sauces, stir-fries, and dressings

STORAGE GUIDELINES

- More delicate than oranges: room temperature 3–7 days
- Refrigerate in a loose bag/crisper: 2–3 weeks
- Peeled segments airtight: 2–3 days refrigerated
- Juice/zest: freeze up to 6 months

GRAPEFRUIT

IN SEASON: WINTER & SPRING

Grapefruits range from pale white to pink and ruby red (sweeter, less bitter).

Thick rinds hold juicy, segmented flesh with a floral, slightly bitter finish. U.S. supply comes mainly from Florida, Texas, and California and is available year-round, with peak season winter through early spring.



MEDICINAL QUALITIES

- Excellent source of vitamin C; pink/ruby varieties also provide vitamin A and lycopene
- Rich in citrus flavonoids (e.g., naringin) with antioxidant properties
- Hydrating and naturally low in calories; fiber in membranes supports digestion
- Medication caution: grapefruit can interact with certain drugs (e.g., some statins, blood-pressure meds). If applicable, check with a clinician.

SELECTION GUIDELINES

- Choose fruit that feels heavy for its size with smooth, glossy skin
- Color may vary by variety; slight blush on yellow skin is normal
- Avoid soft spots, cuts, mold at the stem, or a lightweight/spongy feel (dehydration)
- For zesting, pick clean, unblemished fruit and wash well

PREPARATION GUIDELINES

- For easiest eating, supreme (cut away peel/pith and segment) to reduce bitterness
- Zest before cutting; avoid the bitter white pith
- Broil with a light sprinkle of sugar, honey, or spice for a classic breakfast; add to salads, ceviche, grain bowls, and desserts
- Juice is excellent in dressings, marinades, and cocktails; add at the end of cooking to keep flavors bright
- Pair with salty, spicy, fatty, or bitter elements (avocado, fennel, chilies, olives) for balance

STORAGE GUIDELINES

- Room temperature: up to 1 week
- Refrigerate in a breathable or lightly sealed bag: 2–3 weeks
- Segmented fruit in an airtight container: 3–4 days refrigerated
- Juice/zest: freeze up to 6 months

Creamy & Snackable

AKA: TROPICAL & SUBTROPICAL FRUIT
(AVOCADOS, KIWIS, AND FIGS)

SNACKING OR TOPPINGS

Avocados, kiwis, and figs are rich, creamy, and versatile—great on toast, in bowls, or as a sweet snack. Avocados ripen on the counter; move to the fridge when just soft. Tip: scoop kiwi with a spoon—no fancy peeling required.



AVOCADO

IN SEASON: SPRING THROUGH FALL

Avocados are native to the tropics of Central America and are the fruit of the *Persea americana*, a tall evergreen tree that can grow up to 65 feet in height. This tree originated in southern Mexico and Columbia around 5,000 B.C.E. The name avocado came from the Aztec word *ahuacatl*. Avocados possess a tough dark rind and a silky smooth golden-green flesh. Avocados are recognized by their egg-like shape, buttery rich flavor and single large pit and were thought to be an aphrodisiac. Avocados have also been referred to as the Alligator Pear, as a result of their shape and leather like appearance.

There are more than 80 varieties of avocados which have a long season of availability because they grow in regions with temperate climates. Depending on the specific variety, avocados are in season from early spring through late autumn and can vary in weight from 8 ounces to 3 pounds. Avocados varieties are divided into two main categories: Guatemalan and Mexican.

MEDICINAL QUALITIES

- Avocados are a good source of monounsaturated fat and omega-3 fatty acids
- The fats in avocado increase the body's ability to absorb and use antioxidants
- Avocados are rich in fiber
- Avocados contain the potassium
- Avocados are full of iron
- Avocados supply vitamins E and K
- Avocados are a good source of folate

SELECTION GUIDELINES

- Choose avocados that yield slightly when gently pressed
- Avoid avocados that feel mushy or show signs of mold
- Hass avocados should have a dark green, almost black skin
- Other avocado varieties stay green throughout the ripening process

PREPARATION GUIDELINES

- Use avocados immediately because their flesh will quickly turn brown when exposed to the air
- Cut avocados right before serving or sprinkle them with lemon juice to slow down oxidation and discoloration
- Cut avocados lengthwise in half when prepping and rotate both halves in opposite directions to separate.
- Remove the large pit from the avocado and discard
- Avocados are best eaten raw or slightly heated because their delicate flavor does not hold up well to most cooking methods
- Ripe avocados are used for making guacamole, salsas and flavorful sauces for meat, poultry and fish dishes
- Avocados add rich flavor and texture to sandwiches, salads, spring rolls, sushi, shakes, egg and grain dishes
- Avocados can also be used as a vessel for showcasing baked eggs, chilled seafood salads or grain salads

STORAGE GUIDELINES

- Avocados are best stored in a cool room temperature for up to two days
- Store avocados in the refrigerator for up to one week

FIGS

IN SEASON: MID TO LATE SUMMER

Figs are one of the oldest known fruits, dating as far back as 5,000 B.C. They are native to western Asia. It is believed that Buddha achieved enlightenment under the Bodhi, a large and sacred type of fig tree.

For centuries, figs have been used to sweeten food, long before sugarcane was cultivated. This soft pear-shaped fruit is in fact a swollen flower that carries many tiny seeds within that are the true fruit of this tree.

Today figs flourish on small trees in the warm and dry climates of the Middle East, Mediterranean and in California. Figs are in season mid to late summer and there are over 150 varieties. Fig skins can be purple, green yellow, brown or white and their flesh ranges from pale gold to deep red. Among the most common varieties are: Adriatic, Mission, Calimyrna, Kadota, Smyrna.



MEDICINAL QUALITIES

- Figs are a natural laxative due to their high soluble and insoluble fiber content
- Figs contain heart-healthy minerals like potassium, magnesium and calcium
- Figs have a high concentration of vitamins K and A
- Both fresh and dried figs are excellent sources of polyphenol antioxidants

SELECTION GUIDELINES

- Select figs that are soft and dry to the touch and plump in shape
- Avoid purchasing severely wrinkled, bruised or discolored figs.
- Figs are best eaten as soon as possible because they are fragile and perishable

PREPARATION GUIDELINES

- Be cautious when handling figs because their delicate skin can become easily bruised
- Rinse figs under cold water and hand dry them before using in a recipe or serving fresh
- The outer skin or peel of a fig is edible and can be left on for eating and cooking
- Use a sharp paring knife to cut through the soft flesh figs
- Figs can be enjoyed fresh or dried for a snack
- Figs are good accompaniments for soft and pungent cheeses
- Fig jams are popular spreads to serve with cheeses, crackers and breads
- Figs are durable enough to be grilled and incorporated into savory salads and grain dishes
- Figs are very versatile in the Mediterranean diet and accompany stewed and roasted meats
- Figs add color and sweetness to baked desserts and creamy custards

STORAGE GUIDELINES

- Refrigerate figs no more than one or two days
- Store figs in a single layer on paper towels

KIWI

IN SEASON: LATE FALL THROUGH SPRING

Kiwi (most commonly green Hayward; gold kiwis are sweeter with smooth bronze skin) has tangy-sweet flesh studded with tiny edible seeds. The fuzzy brown skin is also edible when well-washed. U.S. kiwi is grown mainly in California, generally available year-round with peak supply late fall through spring; imports (e.g., New Zealand/Chile) cover the rest of the year.



MEDICINAL QUALITIES

- Exceptionally rich in vitamin C (often more than an orange)
- Provides fiber (including soluble pectin) for digestive health
- Source of vitamin K and vitamin E, plus potassium and folate
- Antioxidants including lutein/zeaxanthin support eye health
- Contains actinidin, a natural enzyme that aids protein digestion

SELECTION GUIDELINES

- Choose fruit that is heavy for its size and yields slightly to gentle pressure
- Avoid shriveled, overly soft, bruised, or moldy fruit
- For later use, buy firm kiwis and ripen at room temperature; gold kiwis are ready a bit sooner

PREPARATION GUIDELINES

- Wash well; the skin is edible (rub off fuzz if desired) or peel with a knife/peeler
- Halve and scoop with a spoon, or slice for salads, salsas, parfaits, and desserts
- The actinidin enzyme tenderizes meat—marinate briefly (30–60 min) to avoid mushiness
- Actinidin can curdle dairy/gelatin; add kiwi at serving to yogurt, cream, or gelatin dishes
- Excellent in smoothies, fruit bowls, and as a tart accent for fish or poultry

STORAGE GUIDELINES

- Ripen at room temperature 3–5 days (place with banana/apple to speed via ethylene)
- Once ripe, refrigerate in a bag/crisper up to 1–2 weeks
- Cut kiwi in an airtight container: 2–3 days refrigerated
- For smoothies, peeled chunks can be frozen up to 3 months (texture softens on thawing)

Fungi

AKA: MUSHROOMS

BROWN IN THE PAN TO TASTE

Savory and “meaty,” mushrooms sauté and roast quickly for pastas, tacos, bowls, and toast. Don’t soak—wipe or brush clean to avoid sogginess.

Cook over medium-high heat to brown, then finish with salt, butter, or herbs.



MUSHROOMS

IN SEASON: WHEN CONDITIONS SUIT

Mushrooms are edible types of fungi and are believed to date back as far as prehistoric times. There are roughly 40,000 mushroom varieties worldwide. Most grow in the wild. The ancient Greeks and Romans are thought to be the first civilizations to cultivate mushrooms for cooking.

Mushroom foraging is a very respected practice. Experienced foragers gather the most flavorful mushrooms during the spring and autumn season when weather conditions are cool and humid. Other mushroom varieties are harvested throughout the year and are used in a variety of international cuisines.

Mushrooms have a rich, earthy flavor, and are divided into two culinary categories: cultivated and wild.

The cultivated varieties are:

- Button or white mushrooms (cultivated)
- Large, dark brown portobello mushrooms (cultivated under special conditions)
- And the wild mushrooms are:
- Shiitake
- Porcini
- Morel
- Oyster
- Matsutake
- Chaterelle



MEDICINAL QUALITIES

- Mushrooms are an excellent source of folate
- Mushrooms have been used in Asian Teas and in homeopathic remedies

SELECTION GUIDELINES

- Select mushrooms that are firm to the touch and have smooth and unblemished caps
- Do not select mushrooms that are broken, limp, wrinkled, soggy or moldy
- Mushrooms with gray stems or are dry at the ends are old and should not be used
- Choose mushrooms that feel heavy because it indicates that the mushrooms are fresh and are not dried out

PREPARATION GUIDELINES

- When preparing mushrooms use a damp cloth or soft brush to clean and remove dirt off the outside cap of the mushroom
- Avoid soaking mushrooms in water because fungi absorbs liquid quickly and will become soggy and flavorless
- If damp cloth or soft brush is not available, rinse mushrooms quickly and dry thoroughly with paper towels just before cooking
- Trim the ends off of mushrooms that have tender stems or remove stems entirely if extremely tough (i.e. shiitake)
- Mushrooms are extremely versatile in the kitchen and depending on the variety are best sautéed, roasted, stir-fried or grilled
- Mushrooms are great in cream based soups, tomato, cream and meat-based sauces

- Portobello and shiitake mushrooms are great for stuffing with vegetable, grain and bread mixtures
- Mushrooms can be chopped and put into salads, wild rice, pilafs and pasta dishes
- Mushrooms are often sautéed to accompany fish, sausage, beef or pork dishes
- Mushrooms are used in Italian cuisine for pizza, pasta and polenta
- Mushrooms are used to add flavor and texture to egg dishes, appetizers with puff pastry and in fondues
- Mushrooms may go into remoulade, risotto, perogi, lasanga and the German spaetzle dishes
- Portobello mushrooms are great for using in sandwiches as a substitute for meats
- Veggie burgers often use mushrooms as ingredients
- Mushrooms can also be dried and reconstituted in water to allow their savory and woody flavor to be released
- In Asian cuisine, mushrooms are utilized in stir-fries, spring rolls, dumplings, soup, curry and noodle dishes
- In French cuisine, mushrooms are incorporated into burgundy sauce

STORAGE GUIDELINES

- Store all mushroom varieties in a paper bag in the refrigerator for up to four days

Spears & Stems

AKA: STALKS & BUDS
(ASPARAGUS, ARTICHOKE, RHUBARB)

GRILL, ROAST
FRY OR DIP

Asparagus cooks in minutes (pan, grill, or roast) and loves lemon or parmesan; artichokes are great steamed and dipped; rhubarb is tart but softens into jams, compotes, or pies. Trim woody ends on asparagus for best texture. Tip: rhubarb needs sugar—treat it like a sour fruit.



ASPARAGUS

IN SEASON: SPRING

Asparagus is a member of the lily family. Its green sword-like spears have grown wild for over 2,000 years. It is cultivated throughout Europe, northern Africa, western Asia, and throughout the U.S. Asparagus peaks during early spring. For the ancient Egyptians, asparagus was eaten for its healing properties and used as an offering to the gods during ceremonies.

The stalks from this vegetable can grow as thin as a pencil or as thick as a human thumb. Asparagus stalks range in color from grassy green with purplish tips, to full purple to white. White asparagus were covered during the cultivation process to protect the stalks from sunlight and keep them from producing chlorophyll. White asparagus has a nuttier flavor than green asparagus, but still has the same nutritional value. The purple variety of asparagus turns green when cooked and tends to taste sweeter.



MEDICINAL QUALITIES

- Asparagus has a high concentration of folic acid
- Asparagus is rich in potassium
- Green asparagus is a good source of vitamin C
- Asparagus contains fiber
- Thiamine and vitamin B6 are found in asparagus

SELECTION GUIDELINES

- Look for stalks that are firm and have tightly formed, dry tips
- Choose asparagus that have a slight purple tinge to their stalk tips and
- Asparagus stems ends should look fresh and moist
- Refrain from choosing asparagus that have soft or broken tips

PREPARATION GUIDELINES

- Use a vegetable peeler to whittle down the fibrous thick stalks (so they'll cook evenly)
- Raw asparagus has a crisp texture; when cooked becomes tender with a mild grassy flavor
- Asparagus is used for creating appetizers
- Asparagus may be used as a focal point in entrees
- Asparagus may be sautéed in egg, pasta and grain dishes
- Asparagus may be steamed and blanched to accompany fish and meat dishes
- Asparagus can be roasted or grilled with oil and a variety of herbs and spices
- Asparagus is used as a topping for pizza and salads
- Pureed asparagus may be added into cream-based soups
- Asparagus is used in Asian stir-fry and noodle dishes
- In Germany, during Spargelzeit or "asparagus season" white asparagus is considered a "royal vegetable" that is prepared with butter or hollandaise sauce and accompanied by boiled potatoes, cured ham slices and boiled eggs
- Raw asparagus spears can also be shaved and used for garnishing fresh pasta or egg dishes

STORAGE GUIDELINES

- Use fresh asparagus as soon as possible—it quickly deteriorates
- To store asparagus, cut one inch off the base of the stalks and set them upright in a container of shallow water for up to four days

CELERY

IN SEASON: WINTER

Celery, a member of the parsley family, peaks in flavor in winter. The tender, pale center stalks—called the heart—are milder than the outer ribs. Native to the Mediterranean and likely the selinon in Homer’s Odyssey (c. 850 B.C.), celery was first used medicinally in Egypt, China, and Europe before becoming a food in 17th-century France and spreading across Europe. In the U.S., it took off in the late 19th century and even flavored Dr. Brown’s Cel-Ray tonic (1869), a New York deli staple.

Common varieties include Pascal (pale green with feathery leaves), Asian celery (long, thin, intensely flavored stalks used for pickling and stir-fries), and self-blanching types (yellow-green, juicy, and quick-cooking).



MEDICINAL QUALITIES

- Celery seed is used in India (ayurvedic medicine) to treat colds, arthritis and diseases of the liver and spleen
- Celery seeds and celery seed oil have been used to treat high blood pressure, digestive problems, water retention, colds and the flu
- Today we know that celery seed can increase urine production and may also treat arthritis and reduce inflammation in the body
- Animal studies suggest that celery seed oil helps lower blood pressure and cholesterol
- Celery is a good source of fiber
- Because celery is low in calories, high in fiber and water it is a staple of dieters
- Celery contains high levels of vitamin A, K and K
- The most abundant mineral in celery is potassium
- The mineral calcium is also present in celery
- Trim off both ends of the celery to ensure no dirt or bugs are stuck between the ribs
- Tough strings along celery ribs are removed by running a vegetable peeler down the length of the stalk
- Celery is enjoyed fresh as a snack with dips, dressings, cheese and nut butters
- Celery is chopped and added to salads, grains, pastas, casseroles, stuffing, stews, soups and stocks
- The firm stalks of celery can be gently braised and used as an appetizer or side dish for fish or meat dishes
- Celery is utilized in tuna, egg and chicken salads
- Celery is known as a comfort food for children
- Celery is a powerful ingredient in juices and smoothies
- The leaves of celery can be used as a garnish on top of savory dishes
- Celery seed is used as a spice and is a great additive to mild dishes such as slaws, salads and soups because of the strong celery flavor

SELECTION GUIDELINES

- Look for celery bunches that have healthy green leaves and firm stalks
- Choose bunches that exhibit a light green color with tight stalks
- Refrain from choosing celery bunches that contain limp, hollow or brown stalks

PREPARATION GUIDELINES

- Separate stalks from the bunch only as needed in order to keep remaining stalks fresh
- Wash stalks in running water

STORAGE GUIDELINES

- Store whole bunches of celery in a plastic bag in the refrigerator for up to two weeks

FENNEL

IN SEASON: FALL THROUGH SPRING

Fennel is an aromatic vegetable native to the Mediterranean. For thousands of years fennel was used for medicinal and culinary benefits. Fennel belongs to the parsley family. It was used in Roman kitchens before spreading far beyond Italy. The colonists may have brought this vegetable to America in the 1600s.

Fennel is in season from fall until spring. The stalks, leaves, and seeds of fennel are used in several world cuisines, especially those of Italy and Scandinavia.

The bulb is the most prized part of the fennel plant and has a sweet mild anise flavor.



MEDICINAL QUALITIES

- Oil from fennel seeds contains the active compound anethole which promotes digestion, soothes stomach discomfort, minimizes gas pain and bloating
- Within Indian culture, it is common to drink fennel tea or chew fennel seeds after consuming spicy food
- Fennel is a good source of fiber
- Fennel contains potassium
- The fennel bulb contains vitamin C

SELECTION GUIDELINES

- Look for smooth and tightly layered fennel bulbs that are free of cracks and bruises
- Fennel that has white to pale green, rounded fat bulbs white and pale green will be more succulent compared to narrow or yellow colored bulbs
- Avoid fennel that has dried stalks or wilted leaves

PREPARATION GUIDELINES

- Cut away the green stems and leaves for garnish
- Remove the outer layer of the bulb and trim off any discolored areas
- When preparing the bulb for cooking, cut the bulb in half lengthwise and remove the base of the core if it is overly thick or hard
- Rinse the bulb under running water to remove grit trapped between the layers
- Raw fennel bulbs are shaved and used in salads containing citrus or balsamic vinegar to offset with acid the prominent anise flavor
- This licorice flavor in the fennel bulb matches with fish dishes
- Fennel can be braised with oil, herbs and spices as a side dish
- Fennel can be grilled, roasted or sautéed and used in grain, pasta, stuffing, casseroles and pizza toppings
- Fennel that has been cooked down and caramelized offers a wonderful sweetness to cured meat or seafood appetizers and soups

STORAGE GUIDELINES

- Store fennel bulbs in a plastic bag in the refrigerator for up to five days so that the stalks and leaves stay intact

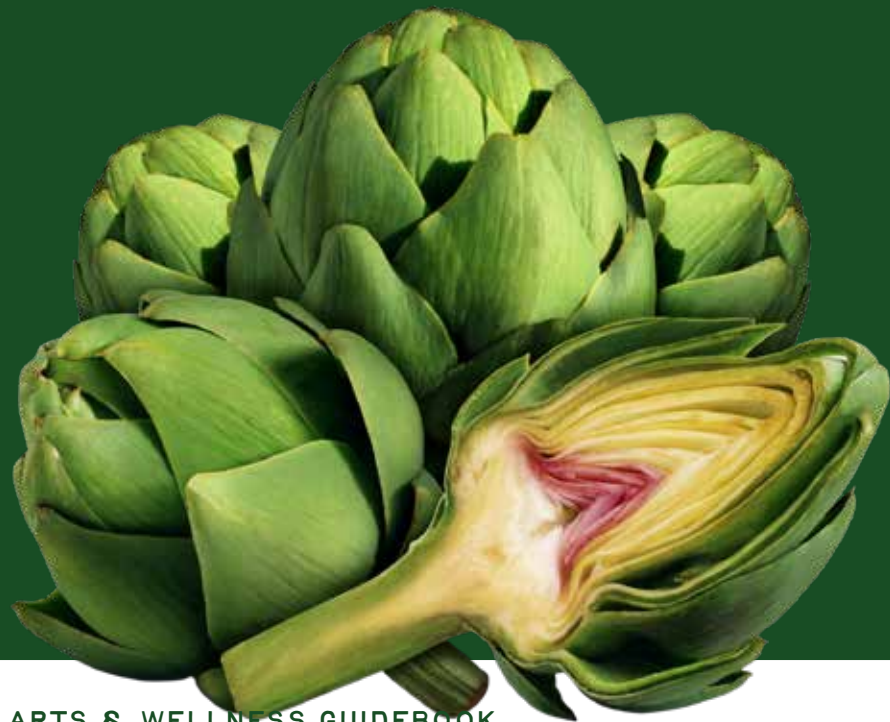
ARTICHOKE

IN SEASON: FALL THROUGH SPRING

Artichokes are native to the Mediterranean region and are the flower buds of a type of thistle. Artichokes have an armor of fibrous, mostly inedible, thorny leaves. At the center is a tender heart with a mild buttery flavor. They grow in a range of sizes from nut sized babies to large ones known as globe artichokes that can weigh up to a pound each. Artichokes were first enjoyed by the Romans and over time its popularity spread throughout Europe and the U.S.

The globe artichoke is commonly referred to as the French or green artichoke. Baby artichokes are grown lower down on the plant than their globe counterparts.

Artichokes are in season during early spring followed by a second shorter season in late autumn or early winter. All of the U.S. artichoke supply is cultivated in California and there is an annual artichoke festival in Castroville, CA to celebrate this versatile vegetable.



MEDICINAL QUALITIES

- Artichoke leaves contain lots of fiber but the heart does not contain as much nutrition
- Artichokes have been used as a diuretic (a substance that tends to increase the discharge of urine)
- Artichokes have been as a treatment for hyperuricemia (which is when the body contains high levels of uric-acid in the blood that can often cause gout)
- Artichokes are an excellent source of fiber
- Artichokes are a good source of vitamins C and K
- Artichokes contain folate (folic acid)
- Artichokes contain magnesium

SELECTION GUIDELINES

- Choose artichokes that are heavy for their size and have moist stems
- Select artichokes that are olive green in color and have closed, tight leaves
- Avoid artichokes that have black streaks along the outer leaves (an indication of frost damage)

PREPARATION GUIDELINES

- Trim the tough outer leaves of the artichoke starting from the base
- Then trim away the prickly tips of the remaining leaves with kitchen shears
- Use a serrated knife to slice off the first one or two inches of the artichoke to reveal the frilly choke inside
- Scoop out the frilly choke inside before cooking

- Rub them with fresh lemon juice after cutting to prevent discoloration
- Artichokes can be marinated, steamed, roasted, stewed, sautéed or braised
- Artichokes pair well with olive oil, garlic and acidic fruits to bring out their buttery flavor
- Steamed or boiled artichokes are served with drawn butter, flavored vinaigrettes or aioli (garlic mayonnaise) as a dip for the individual leaf ends and heart
- Artichoke hearts can be incorporated into grain, pasta, pizza, casserole and quiche dishes
- Artichoke hearts can be shaved and enjoyed in salads or cooked and used in creamy dips
- Marinated artichokes provide vibrant flavor and color to antipasto or appetizer plates that accompany cheeses and cured meats
- Artichokes can be pureed and used in cream soups
- Fried baby artichokes are used for dipping in sauces and dressings
- Artichokes can also be used whole as a bed for seafood salads or poached eggs
- Artichokes are a staple in the Mediterranean diet

STORAGE GUIDELINES

- When storing artichokes, sprinkle the outside leaves lightly with water and store in a plastic bag
- Store artichokes in the coldest part of the refrigerator for up to one week

RHUBARB

IN SEASON: FALL

Rhubarb originated in China nearly 3,000 years ago and spread west in the 18th century to Russia and Europe for its many desired healing properties. Over the centuries, rhubarb root has been one of the most widely used plants in Chinese herbal medicine.

Rhubarb is technically a vegetable, but has been classified here as a fruit because of how it has been used in history. Rhubarb is regarded as pie plant because when cooked with sugar and put into a crust, it has been favored in America since the early 1800s.

Rhubarb grows in long stalks with broad and somewhat curly leaves. Only reddish green stalks are eaten because the leaves contain large amounts of oxalic acid, a toxic compound harmful to humans.

MEDICINAL QUALITIES

- Rhubarb roots are harvested in fall from plants that are at least six years old and then dried for medicinal use
- Rhubarb root brings balance to the digestive system
- Chronic constipation or diarrhea is relieved by rhubarb as a laxative or as a diuretic
- Rhubarb treats liver, gallbladder, hemorrhoids and menstrual problems
- Rhubarb root has been used externally as an antiseptic to treat burns

SELECTION GUIDELINES

- Look for crisp, firm, bright colored stalks free of blemishes or dried areas
- Avoid tough, stringy rhubarb stalks that are turning green
- Younger, narrower stalks that possess a dark red or pink color tend to be sweeter and more tender than wider or light-colored stalks

PREPARATION GUIDELINES

- Rhubarb has a crisp consistency and sour flavor
- Rhubarb is cooked with sugar to balance its tartness
- To retain color during cooking, blanch rhubarb stalks in boiling water for one or two minutes then immerse stalks in cold water
- Rhubarb is used to create cobblers, sorbet, relishes and sauces for rich, oily fish (mackerel, bluefish), duck and game
- Rhubarb stalks can be combined with other fruits like strawberries to create jams or sauces

STORAGE GUIDELINES

- Store rhubarb stalks in a plastic bag in the refrigerator for up to three days
- If rhubarb stalks go limp, trim stem bottoms and stand in cold water





Herbs & SPICES

Herbs and spices are the building blocks of flavor. Herbs are the fragrant leaves of plants (like parsley, cilantro, basil) that add freshness and lift; use a light hand so they don't overpower the dish, and add delicate fresh herbs near the end of cooking for bright flavor. Spices come mostly from seeds, bark, roots, or fruit (like cumin, cinnamon, ginger, pepper). They're usually sold dried, whole or ground, and have concentrated, potent taste—bloom them early in hot oil or toast them briefly to release aroma.

Whole spices give slow, deep flavor; ground spices act fast but fade sooner. Versatile spice blends—such as curry powder, chili powder, Chinese five-spice, and pickling spice—offer ready-made complexity and help you layer multicultural flavors with consistency. Start small, taste, and adjust.

INTRODUCTION TO HERBS

FRESH VS. DRIED HERBS

Most herbs are available fresh and dried and are used for different cooking needs. Fresh herbs are more vibrant in color and rich in flavor than dried herbs, although herbs like thyme, bay leaf and rosemary dry more efficiently than others.

QUALITY

Aroma is a good indicator of quality in both fresh and dried herbs. When picking out herbs, crumble a few leaves to see if a fresh aroma is produced. A weak, stale aroma indicates herbs are older and less potent in flavor. You can also check for freshness by examining the physical appearance of herbs. Herbs should have good color, fresh-looking leaves and stems, with no signs of wilting, brown spots, sunburn or pest damage.

STORAGE

In general, herbs should be stored loosely wrapped in a damp paper towel. If desired, wrapped herbs can be placed into plastic bags to help retain freshness. Fresh herbs should be kept at 35 to 45 degrees Fahrenheit. Some leafy bunches of herbs (watercress and parsley) can be trimmed and placed into containers of water for storage. Dried herbs should never be stored near a stove because heat weakens flavor.

USAGE

Fresh herbs should be minced or cut into a chiffonade as close to serving time as possible to prevent oxidation and discoloration. Fresh herbs are usually incorporated at the end of the cooking process in order to add a burst of flavor and garnish to a dish. By adding fresh herbs at the end of the cooking process it allows their strong flavors to stay intact. For uncooked preparations, fresh herbs should be added in advance to allow time for all ingredients to become evenly saturated with flavor. Dried herbs are incorporated at the beginning stages of the cooking process in soups, sauces and meat dishes in order to build rich flavors over a longer period of time.

HISTORY

Through history spices have been traded as gold, wars have been fought over them and Queen Elizabeth sent Christopher Columbus through uncharted waters to find more of them. They have been used medicinally in every culture for thousands of years. The trade and use of spices conjures up visions of exotic places, colorful market places and knowledgeable elders telling of their multiple uses not only to provide zest or flavor but to aid in digestion, help circulation and to be used to enhance our health in countless ways. Spices are known to have healing powers as well as flavoring abilities.

Herbs & SPICES

INTRODUCTION TO SPICES

QUALITY

Purchase a realistic amount of spice that can be used within two to three months. For optimal flavor, purchase whole spices and grind fresh as close to cooking time as possible.

STORAGE

Whole spices keep longer than ground spices, although most spices retain their potency for six months. Store spices in a cool temperate environment, out of direct sunlight, and in airtight containers. It also helps to store spices in dark-colored glass containers to prevent light from decreasing the potency of the spice. Refrigerate spices to double their life span.

WHEN STORING SPICES, THEIR BIGGEST ENEMIES ARE:

- Air
- Light
- Heat
- Humidity

USAGE

Spices can overpower a dish in large amounts so use good judgment and take time to add the right amount to taste. Sample the dish when adding new spices to get a true sense of the right flavor combination.

EXPLORING INTERNATIONAL SPICES

ORIGIN	COMMON SPICES
CHINA	Ginger, Anise Seed, Garlic, Onion, Red Pepper, Fennel Seed, Cloves, Cinnamon
FRANCE	Tarragon, Shallots, Chives, Marjoram, Thyme, Black Pepper, Rosemary
GERMANY	Caraway Seed, Dill Seed, Onion, Paprika, Ginger, Rosemary, Nutmeg, White Pepper
GREECE	Oregano, Mint, Bay Leaves, Garlic, Onion, Cinnamon, Fennel Seed, Black Pepper
HUNGARY	Paprika, Poppy Seed, Caraway Seed, Garlic, Dill Seed, Onion, Cinnamon, White Pepper
INDIA	Curry, Cumin Seed, Coriander, Turmeric, Red Pepper, Black Pepper, Ginger, Cardamom Seed
INDONESIA	Curry, Garlic, Red Pepper, Ginger, Cinnamon, Nutmeg, Cloves, Caraway Seed
ITALY	Garlic, Basil, Oregano, Onion, Sage, Fennel Seed, Red Pepper, Marjoram
MEXICO	Chili Pepper, Cumin Seed, Oregano, Garlic, Onion, Coriander Seed, Sesame Seed, Cinnamon
MORROCO	Red Pepper, Cumin Seed, Coriander, Mint, Saffron, Anise, Cardamom, Cinnamon
SPAIN	Saffron, Paprika, Garlic, Onion, Parsley, Bay Leaves, Cumin Seed, Sweet Pepper
SWEEDEN	Cardamom Seed, Nutmeg, Dill Seed, Bay Leaves, Allspice, Black Pepper, Mustard, Cinnamon

Herbs
& SPICES



Nuts & SEEDS

Nuts and seeds can be enjoyed raw, toasted, puréed or ground because of their depth in flavor and texture.

Research shows that a range of nut varieties, including walnuts, almonds, hazelnuts, pecans and cashews promote healthy arteries and cholesterol levels when consumed in moderation.

Eating a small handful of nuts about five times a week is a great source of protein and a good source of antioxidants.

"IN A NUTSHELL"

EXPLORING NUT AND SEED VARIETIES

Nuts and seeds can be enjoyed raw, toasted, puréed or ground because of their depth in flavor and texture. Research shows that a range of nut varieties, including walnuts, almonds, hazelnuts, pecans and cashews promote healthy arteries and cholesterol levels when consumed in moderation. Eating a small handful of nuts about five times a week is a great source of protein and a good source of antioxidants.

NUTS

A fruit consisting of a hard or tough shell around an edible kernel.

SEEDS

A flowering plant's unit of reproduction, capable of developing into another such plant.

IS IT TRUE...?

All nuts are seeds, but all seeds aren't nuts. Yep, it's true. Botanically speaking, a nut is a dry fruit with a seed that's encased in a hard, woody shell. While all nuts are seeds (the fruit is the seed), not all seeds are nuts. Seeds can be separated from the fruit—they are not one and the same—such as pumpkin seeds.

KEEP THESE NUTS AND SEEDS STOCKED IN THE PANTRY...

Almonds: Almonds are calcium-rich and available year round. They are sold whole, shelled, raw, blanched, sliced, slivered, and dry-roasted.

Brazil Nuts: Brazil nuts come from magnificent large trees that grow wild in the Amazon rain forest. Similar to coconut in texture, the sweet, rich meat of Brazil nuts is eaten raw or roasted.

Cashews: The cashew tree is related to poison ivy and poison sumac, but don't be afraid! This rich, curved nut is actually lower in total fat than most nuts. Cashews are both eaten raw and incorporated into sweet and savory dishes.

Chestnuts: Chestnuts are the lowest in fat of all nuts and are appreciated for their flavorful contribution to soups, stuffings and stews as well as the holiday tradition of roasting and eating them. Chestnuts are available fresh only in autumn, but dried, canned and pureed versions are available year round.

Flax Seeds: Flax seeds are the richest plant source of omega-3 fatty acids and are high in fiber. While they're identical nutritionally, brown flax seeds have deep, nutty flavor while golden flax seeds are mild. Add to breads, pancakes, cookies and smoothies or sprinkle on cereal and salads.

Hazelnuts or Filberts: Bakers and confectioners are partial to these nutrient dense nuts that can be made into butter, flour, oil and paste. Hazelnuts have a rich flavor and texture that compliment desserts and snacks

Hemp Seeds: Hemp seeds are a healthful food with an omega-3 profile very similar to flax seeds. They're similar in flavor to sunflower or flax seeds and can be used in or on baked goods, salads, yogurt and cereal.

Macadamia Nuts: These deeply rich and creamy nuts have the highest fat profile and are among the most expensive varieties.

Peanuts: Peanuts are actually legumes, not nuts! Peanuts originated in South America but have become an important crop throughout the tropics and in the southern half of the U.S. They have a good deal of both protein and fiber.

Pecans: Pecans are native to the southern Mississippi River valley and are buttery and slightly bittersweet. They are commonly used in pies, quick breads, cakes, cookies, candies and ice cream.

Pine Nuts: Pine nuts also called pinolos, pignon, piñon, pinyon and pignoli nuts are the edible seeds of pine trees. They are the essential ingredient in fresh pesto and are delicious sprinkled over salads or incorporated into baked goods.

Pistachios: Pistachios have beige shells with nuts that range from dull yellow to deep green. Primarily sold as a snack food, they're easily adaptable to recipes that call for pecans or other nuts.

Pumpkin Seeds (Pepitas): Roasted pumpkin seeds are in casseroles, salads, soups and breads. Their rich peanut-like flavor makes them a terrific snack food.

Sesame Seeds: Sesame seeds are sprinkled on breads and cakes as a form of decoration, but they're delicious and good-looking on just about any food. Look for black or white sesame seeds in the bulk department at grocery stores.

Sunflower Seeds: Sunflowers belongs to the daisy family and are native to North America. Their shelled seeds are delicious eaten raw or toasted, added to cakes and breads or sprinkled on salads or cereals.

Walnuts: Walnuts have come into greater favor recently because they contain omega-3 fatty acids, a heart-healthy compound. In addition to their purported health benefits, walnuts add texture and great flavor to pastas, salads, stir fries and desserts.

TIPS FOR TOASTING NUTS

While nuts are delicious eaten raw, toasting them brings out a tasty rich flavor. To enhance their flavor or crisp them up, toast nuts on the stove or in the oven.

On the stove: Place a single layer of nuts in a heavy, ungreased skillet and toast for five to 10 minutes over medium heat, shaking the pan and stirring the nuts until they're golden brown and fragrant, then remove them from the pan, spread out and let cool.

In the oven: Arrange the nuts in a single layer in a shallow baking pan and toast in a 350°F oven for five to 10 minutes, stirring them occasionally.

YOUR

Menu



Staples

**GRAINS, PASTAS
AND LEGUMES**

Every menu worldwide contains grains, pastas and legumes. They are cultivated nearly everywhere except the North and South Poles and they contain vitamins, minerals, complex carbohydrates such as starch and dietary fiber along with flavonoids and anti-oxidants. Grains, pastas and legumes may be enjoyed on their own but flavoring them with a sauce always enhances their quality. Sauces that are low in fat are especially good—although small amounts of higher fat ingredients are acceptable to use along with any grain, pasta or dish with legumes.

GRAINS

Grains are...the edible seeds of various members of the grass family. Grains are also called cereals or cereal grains.

SEED AND KERNEL PARTS

There are four parts to each seed or kernel:

- **Husk** – an inedible fibrous outer layer that is removed during processing
- **Endosperm** – is the starchy mass that forms most of the kernel and is a good source of protein
- **Bran** – a tough but edible layer covering the endosperm and is a good source of fiber and B vitamins
- **Germ** – the tiny embryo that forms the new plant when the seed sprouts



A product that is labeled whole grain consists of the endosperm, bran and germ. The grain may be polished or milled to remove the bran and germ. White rice has been polished so that only the endosperm is left.

TYPES OF GRAINS

Grains have sustained human life throughout history because they have been the most consistent and available source of nutrients and calories. Rice, corn, wheat and other varieties of grains are grown, cultivated, harvested and processed by many cultures. As an chef advocate trainee, you will become familiar with the different methods for selecting, preparing, cooking and storing each significant type of grain.

RICE

Rice is the starchy seed of a grass that grows partly in water. Rice was first cultivated in China, going back to about 2,500 B.C. With origins in India and Southeast Asia, rice is used as a staple by more than half of the world's population and can be incorporated into almost any cuisine. Thailand, Vietnam, and China are the three largest exporters of rice.

The flavor of rice adapts to the foods with which it is served and its texture adds an appealing chewiness to dishes. All rice starts out as a brown color because the bran is still attached. Once it is removed, milled and polished it becomes white rice. This process removes some vitamins and minerals, but it produces the lighter-textured product most people prefer.

White rice appears in several forms and is used in several ways:

- Enriched white rice received a coating of vitamins to compensate for some of the nutrients lost in milling
- Short-grain and medium-grain white rice have small, round kernels that become sticky when cooked
- The rice used in Japanese cuisine for everyday eating and for making sushi is short-grain rice
- The popular dessert rice pudding is made from short-grain rice
- Medium-grain rice is ideal for salads and in stuffing recipes that incorporate meat and vegetables
- Long-grain white rice has long, slender grains that stay separate and fluffy when properly cooked
- Long grain white rice is used for pilafs, warm and colds salads, and casseroles

Parboiled or converted rice

This kind of rice is a specially processed variety of long grain. It has been partially cooked under steam pressure, re-dried and then milled or polished. This process results in a higher vitamin and mineral content, compared with regular milled white rice. Parboiled rice is widely used in food service because the grains stay firm and separate without becoming mushy or sticky. Parboiled rice takes slightly more liquid and time to cook.

Instant rice

Precooked and dried, this rice can be prepared quickly. It does not hold well after cooking, as the grains quickly lose their shape and become mushy.

Brown rice

With its bran layer left on, brown rice is a light brown color. It has a slightly coarse crunchy texture and nutty flavor. Brown rice is available in short, medium or long grain varieties. Brown rice takes about twice as long to cook as white rice.

Arborio rice

This is an Italian variety of short-grain rice essential for making risotto.

Basmati rice

Basmati is an extra-long grain rice that has a distinctive nutty flavor. It is widely used in India and other surrounding countries.

Jasmine rice

This delicate, floral-scented rice is a long-grain white variety that is cultivated in Thailand and other parts of Southeast Asia.

Glutinous or sticky rice

This sweet-tasting short-grain rice becomes quite sticky and chewy when cooked. It is used for a number of special dishes, including desserts, in Chinese, Japanese and Thai cuisines. Mango with sticky rice and coconut milk is a popular Thai dessert. Sticky rice is often cooked by soaking and steaming rather than boiling.

CORN

Corn is a cereal plant that yields large seeds, or kernels, set in rows on a cob. Over a period of thousands of years, Native Americans transformed corn, which they called maize, through special cultivation techniques. Maize was developed from a wild grass (teosinte) that was originally grown in Central America and Southern Mexico 7,000 years ago.

Unlike other grains which have a husk covering each seed, corn has a set of husks covering the entire seed head, or ear of corn. Corn is the only grain that can be eaten fresh. Corn kernels are ground into cornmeal and cooked into porridge or used in baked goods.

The culinary term meal is defined as a coarse-ground grain. It is different from the way wheat is ground to make flour—wheat is a fine-ground grain. Common cornmeal is yellow or white, depending on the variety of corn. Blue cornmeal is derived from early varieties of blue corn grown by Native Americans.

Masa

Masa is the Spanish word for dough and is made from dried, coarse-ground corn to make corn tortillas, tamales, pupusas and other Latin American dishes.

Polenta

Polenta is Italian-style cornmeal. Polenta is paired with a variety of stews, braised dishes and hearty meat and tomato sauces that provide plenty of flavorful juices for the polenta to soak up. Also, polenta is served as a creamy side dish for grilled meats and vegetables.

Hominy

Corn kernels treated with lye are known as hominy. When hominy is cracked (the coarsest grind) into meal, it is used to make the creamy dish called grits, which is popular in Southern cuisine. Hominy in whole-grain form is known in Mexican cuisine as pozole and requires several hours of simmering to become tender and flavorful.

WHEAT

This plant is grown in temperate countries and is most made into flour to create a variety of food products. More of the world’s farmland is devoted to cultivating wheat than to any other food crop. China is the largest wheat producer.

The milling process for white flour separates the bran from the germ. Both wheat germ and wheat bran can be used to enrich the nutritional value and flavor of baked goods and other dishes. Wheat flour is used to make breads, pastas, other desserts and as a thickening agent in sauces.

Different versions of the wheat grain can be used as sides, in stir-fry dishes or ingredients in soups, salads and ground meat dishes. Whole wheat grains cut into smaller pieces are called cracked wheat which is often added to breads or can be cooked like pilaf. Wheatberries are the whole grain minus the hulls. They are generally cooked by boiling or simmering, and the cooking time can take several hours. To reduce the cooking time by one hour, soak the wheatberries in water before cooking.

Bulgar is a type of cracked wheat that has been partially cooked or parched. It comes in coarse, medium and fine granulations and cooking time is shorter than regular cracked wheat. This type of cracked wheat is often served cold as a salad or combined with different vegetables, aromatic herbs and spices, citrus juice and olive oil to flavor and combine the ingredients.

OTHER GRAINS

Grains outside of the three main grain categories of rice, corn, or wheat are still important grains used for creating delicious, flavorful and nutritious side dishes.

Wild rice

This grain is not actually a type of rice but rather the seed of a grass native to the northern U.S. and Canada. The grains are long, slender, hard and have a very dark brown—almost black color. Wild rice has a unique nut-like flavor. Because of its limited availability in the wild, it costs more than other grains. The cultivation of wild rice has increased lately, which helps reduce its price and increases availability.

Farro

Farro is an ancient grain thought to be an ancestor of modern wheat. For thousands of years, farro was used in the Mediterranean and Middle East regions and has been a staple in Italian cuisine. Similar in flavor to wheat farro has a higher protein content. It is delicious when added to stews, casseroles, hearty soups like minestrone or used as a salad grain. It can also be ground to make flour that’s used to make pasta and bread.

Spelt

Spelt is an ancient grain with a history dating back thousands of years in Europe and the Middle East. It was one of the first grains used to make flour for bread and was a staple grain used in ancient Greece and Rome. Its tough outer husk requires a great deal of processing, but it is popular because of its nutty flavor and high protein and fiber content. Spelt is used in salads.

Kamut

This ancient heirloom grain has its origin in areas around Egypt. Kamut is a large grain that is higher in protein than common wheat. Kamut is used in salads and kamut flour is used in making pasta, bread and other baked goods because the grain has a rich buttery taste.

Buckwheat

Not a type of wheat, buckwheat is the seed of a plant related to rhubarb. Buckwheat was first cultivated in South East Asia around 6,000 B.C. from where it spread to Central Asia, Europe and the Middle East. Today Russia and China are the top producers of buckwheat. Whole buckwheat is often ground into flour. It is used to make noodles, pancakes and bread. Toasted buckwheat is called kasha and gives the buckwheat a nutty flavor. Kasha is popular in Eastern European and Jewish cooking. Kasha is cooked using the pilaf method.

Barley

This nutritious and versatile grain dates back more than 10,000 years to South East Asia. During this time, barley was a staple food source for both humans and animals and it was also used to make alcoholic beverages as a form of currency and for medicinal purposes. Barley is usually purchased as pearled barley which means that it has been milled to remove the outer bran layers. Barley is used for giving a chewy texture and nutty flavor to salads, soups and slow-cooked casseroles and stews. It can also be cooked using the pilaf method and served like rice.

Oats

The Middle Eastern countries are where oats have been cultivated for more than 2,000 years. They are now grown in various regions throughout the world, particularly in many countries in Europe where they have been a dietary staple for centuries. Scottish settlers introduced oats to North America in the 1600s. Oats are most familiar in North America as a breakfast food—porridge and granola. This grain is favored because it is both economical and nutritious. Oat flour can be used when making breads and other baked goods.

Steel-cut oats are whole grains that have been cut into small pieces, somewhat resembling cracked wheat. They are usually cooked as porridge or oatmeal because its soluble fiber becomes thick and creamy

when cooked with a liquid. Oats are naturally a little sweet and are a great addition to baked goods.

Rolled oats are whole grains that have been steamed until soft and then flattened between rollers. This processing method reduces the cooking time. If oats are cooked fully and not just softened during the steaming process, they are considered instant oats because they do not need additional cooking time and only need the addition of boiling water to reconstitute (restore to a former condition by adding water).

Oat bran is the outer husk of an oat grain and is rich in fiber, vitamins, and minerals. It is great to add to baked goods such as bread, muffins, cookies and smoothies. Oat bran can be used as a substitute for breadcrumbs in meatloaf or hamburgers.

Millet

Millet is a small, round yellow grain that is an important food source in much of Africa and Asia. Millet has been an important food staple throughout human history and has been cultivated in East Asia for the last 10,000 years. Millet has high protein content, a mild flavor and can be cooked the same way as rice. Millet is used in a variety of international cuisines. In India, millet is used to make roti, a special flatbread. In Russia millet is used for porridge. Candied millet puffs are popular in Japan, and in China millet is made into soup. Millet can also be used in salads, as a breakfast cereal, added to soups and stews. It can also be added to granola and baked goods.

Quinoa

This ancient grain is native to the Andes mountain range in South America and was once the staple food of the Incas. Quinoa has become popular in modern cooking as a supergrain because of its health benefits. Quinoa is high in protein and low in carbohydrates compared to other grains. It is a tiny, round grain with an ivory color and a mild flavor. When cooked, the germ

of the grain unwinds making each grain look like it has a tail. Before cooking quinoa it is important to wash and rinse well in order to remove the bitter coating on the outside of the grain. Quinoa is great in salads, to stuff vegetables and meat products or added to soups, stews and curries. This grain provides great texture to porridge and baked goods.

Amaranth

The Aztecs grew amaranth over 5,000 years ago. It is a tiny, yellow-brown seed with a nutty, somewhat spicy flavor when cooked. It is a good source of protein and is commonly incorporated into vegetarian dishes and in baked goods.

Flaxseed

Flaxseed is a good source of fiber and omega-3 fatty acids. The seeds are mostly used in small quantities in breads and in breakfast cereal preparations. Flax seeds are technically not a grain because they are seeds of a grass that is also used for fiber to weave into linen.

COOKING WITH GRAINS

Most grains are meant to undergo exposure to heat in order to change and soften before being eaten. Prepare them in one of four ways:

- Simmer method
- Pasta method
- Pilaf method
- Risotto method

Simmer method

The most common method for cooking rice and other whole grains is to place the washed grain in a heavy pot with the right amount of water or other liquid to hydrate it, bring it to a simmer, cover and cook slowly until all the water is absorbed.

Pasta method

A variation of the simmer is the pasta method. This method can also be used when Like pasta, grains can be cooked in a large quantity of water and then drained. This method is good for producing separate, unsticky grains, but some nutrients are lost in the cooking water.

The pilaf method

Originally from the Middle East, pilaf (also called pilau) is a grain dish in which the grain, usually rice, is used to accompany stews and grilled meat, poultry, fish and vegetable dishes. Dried fruit, nuts, spices, and other vegetables can be added to rice pilaf to add depth of flavor and texture. Bulgur and barley may be substituted for rice.

The pilaf method is equivalent to the combination cooking method of braising. The grain is first sautéed in fat and then cooked in liquid (preferably in the oven for uniform heating) until the liquid is absorbed. The fat used to sauté helps keep the grains separate and contributes additional flavor.

The risotto method

The word risotto comes from the Italian word riso meaning rice. Risotto is a classic Italian preparation made by a special procedure that is not like the simmer method or the pilaf method. After sautéing the rice (arborio), add a small amount of hot stock or other liquid and stir until the liquid is absorbed. Repeat this process until the rice has absorbed all the liquid and is cooked but still firm. Risotto should be served quickly because it does not hold well. The finished product has a creamy consistency due to the starch that is cooked out of the rice. Other grains can be cooked using this same method.



PASTA

Pasta is...a food made from flour, a pinch of salt, water and sometimes eggs, that is formed into strips, strings or shapes, then dried or used fresh for cooking in boiling water.

Pasta is a staple in international cuisine, but Italy is the country where it earned fame. This starch and carbohydrate is available in hundreds of shapes and sizes in order to complement a variety of sauce preparations and to acknowledge different regional culinary customs.

The term pasta means ‘paste’ in Italian because pasta is created from a mixture or paste of dry flour mixed with wet ingredients. Creative chefs from many cultures still find ways to make, work with and cook the wide array of pasta shapes.

Pasta sold at the market is either dried or refrigerated. The best pasta is always the kind you make fresh in your own kitchen. There are a variety of ways in which pasta can be used, but the most common is to mix with a flavorful sauce and serve as a main course. Pasta shapes in smaller amounts are used in casseroles, soups, stews and salads.

When pasta is being served only with sauce, it is important to choose the specific shape, and quality of pasta that will match. The smaller, more delicate pastas are paired with lighter sauces (white clam sauce) and large, sturdy pastas stand up to thicker, more robust sauces (ragout).

DRIED PASTA

Dried pasta is made from dough that has been mixed into a paste, shaped, and then fully dried before being packaged and sold. Dried pasta is most often made from fine ground semolina (a high-protein flour) and water. Some dried pasta products are made from farina (a soft-textured flour). Pasta meant to be dried rarely contains eggs so it can have a long shelf life without needing any kind of refrigeration or freezing.

During the drying process, pasta is dried at a low temperature for several days until all the moisture has evaporated, allowing it to be stored almost indefinitely.

The firm and rigid texture of dried pasta allows it to be stored easily without damage.

Dried pasta requires a longer cooking time than fresh pasta and will swell in size when boiled. Because of its firm texture, most large sized dried pastas work well with thick sauces containing meat and/or vegetables. Whole wheat pasta is 100 percent whole wheat flour or has some semolina mixed with it. Other grain flours, including buckwheat and farro (spelt) can be used when making dried pasta.

FRESH PASTA

Fresh pasta outshines dried pasta because it is made from flour and eggs, with a small quantity of water and/or oil. It is necessary to refrigerate or freeze fresh pasta to help keep it from spoiling as a result of its moisture content and eggs. Use regular all-purpose or bread flour when making fresh pasta. Avoid using semolina flour—fresh pasta needs a softer flour to create a tender consistency. Whole wheat and buckwheat flour can also be used to make fresh pasta. Other types of flour do not form much gluten (a protein that gives dough elasticity), so they should be mixed with some wheat flour to allow for the correct gluten formation to occur.

The eggs in fresh pasta brighten its color, add flavor and give the pasta more nutritional value. Fresh pasta is commonly made using a variety of seasonal ingredients including vegetable purees of spinach, red peppers, seaweed, beet, tomato, mushroom and pumpkin. Also, fresh pasta can showcase other flavoring ingredients such as fresh herbs, dried chili, grated lemon zest, and saffron. In Italy, black squid ink is even used to give a unique color and flavor to fresh pasta and goes well with seafood sauces.

Fresh pasta has a softer texture than dried pasta and requires only a short cooking time. Testing often for doneness is required to prevent pasta from overcooking. Fresh pasta swells only slightly in boiling water. Fresh pasta’s softer texture goes well with lighter sauces, such as cream or butter sauces and it absorbs sauces more deeply than dried pasta products.

PASTA VARIETIES

One batch of dough intended for pasta ends up in many shapes, and although these shapes have different names, the Italians have catalogued most of them.

Strand pastas

These long rods of pasta are generally round but they are available in a square rods also. The basic difference from one variety to the next is the thickness of the strands. Use thicker strands with hearty sauces and thinner strands with delicate sauces.

Flat ribbon pastas

These consist of flat strands of pasta, available in different lengths, widths and thickness, can be short and wide while others are long and narrow. Ribbon pasta may have straight or wavy edges. Many varieties are available fresh and dried. Dried ribbon pasta strips can be layered for casseroles such as lasagna.

Soup pastas

Pasta shapes meant for swimming in broth range from very tiny to the largest tiny. The Italian word for small bits of pasta is pastina. It is recommended that the thinner the soup's broth the smaller the pasta. Some soup pastas are also used in pasta salads. Soup pasta forms can be rings, stars, wheels, hollow tubes and rice shaped.

Filled pastas

Fresh pasta sheets stuffed filling are sealed before boiling. A single pasta sheet is folded over and sealed, or one sheet is placed on top of another and the edges are sealed after the filling has been added. Some sheets are folded over the filling and then twisted to form a hat shaped pasta; others are cut into pillows shaped like squares, circles, triangles and half moons. They are stuffed with a variety of fillings of such as meats, seafood, vegetables, cheeses and seasonings. Filled pastas are first cooked and then served with a sauce, in a broth or added to a salad.

Ravioli is a type of filled pasta and is composed of a filling sealed between two layers of thin egg pasta dough. The ring shaped tortellini is filled with meat and/or cheese. Also, tortelloni is a filled pasta the same shape as tortellini but larger in size. These are usually stuffed with cheese like ricotta and vegetables like spinach. The manicotti tube is filled with cheese (ricotta) mixed with cooked chopped spinach and ground meat then topped with tomato or white sauce and baked.

THE GEOMETRY OF PASTA

Here is a selection of shapes common to dried pastas. Each shape has its own special texture and preparation.

- Anelli - small rings used for soup
- Bucatini - long and hollow tubes (thicker than spaghetti)
- Capelli d'angelo - long, very thin shape, ('angel hair' or capellini)
- Conchiglie - shell shaped
- Cresti di gallo - curved with a fluted edge
- Ditalini - very small and short hollow tubes
- Eliche - loose spirals
- Farfalle - bow tie pasta (from the Italian farfalla meaning 'butterfly')
- Fettuccine - long, flat egg noodles
- Fusilli - long and twisted like a corkscrew
- Gemelli - small, twisted s-shaped pasta cut short (from the Italian word for twins)
- Lasagna - flat rectangular sheets, often with rippled edges
- Linguine - looks like flattened spaghetti
- LuMâche - spiral, snail-shaped shells (means 'snail' in Italian)
- Lumaconi - medium sized shells, often used for fillings
- Macaroni - short and narrow hollow tubes

- Elbow Macaroni - short bent hollow tubes of macaroni
- Manicotti - large, hollow cylindrical tubes, sometimes with ridges (cannelloni)
- Orecchiette – discs or 'little ears'
- Orzo - rice shaped
- Penne - hollow tubes with ends cut diagonally; may be smooth or ridged
- Radiatore - curled, ruffled shaped like a radiator
- Rigatoni - thick, ridged tubes
- Rotelle - wheel shaped
- Rotini - spiral shaped
- Spaghetti - long and round rods
- Stelline - tiny stars
- Tagliagelle - wide, flat egg noodles
- Vermicelli - long and very thin; may be shaped like a bird's nest
- Ziti - short, hollow tubes that are cut straight

Cooking and serving pasta

It is important to salt the cooking water because helps the pasta cook evenly, preventing it from developing a slimy surface texture. Salting the water gives flavor to the pasta itself. In this process, salt is a friend to the pasta!

Pasta should be cooked al dente which means 'to the tooth.' Cooking should be stopped when the pasta still feels firm to the bite, not soft and mushy. To test for doneness, break off a small piece or take one shape of the pasta during cooking and bite into it. It should have a slight resistance to your bite.

Overcooked pasta loses its unique texture. Cooking times differ for every shape and size of pasta so keep a close watch on it while it is in the water.

The Italian practice for serving pasta is this:

Once the pasta has reached al dente it is tossed with the sauce the minute after it is drained. Sometimes a little of pasta cooking water is used to loosen up the sauce and pasta mixture. This process allows for the sauce to coat all surfaces of the pasta.

COUSCOUS

Couscous is grain-like pasta made from semolina flour. Traditional couscous is steamed after soaking and it is a time-consuming process. Instant couscous is prepared by adding the dry product to boiling water and letting it stand.

A classic dish of North Africa, especially Morocco and Algeria, couscous is a term that refers to the grain-like product and the dish made from it. Couscous is traditionally served with meat or vegetable stew spooned over it. Unlike the process for making pasta shapes, couscous is made by sprinkling water into a bowl of semolina flour and then stirring with the hand, forming tiny granules of dough. The couscous granules are then sifted out and dried, and the process is repeated. Israeli couscous is typically made in the eastern part of the Mediterranean from regular wheat rather than semolina. Israeli couscous is formed into larger, spherical grains and is typically served in place of rice.

DUMPLINGS

Dumplings are starch products made from soft dough or batter. They can be stuffed with a variety of ingredients and cooked by simmering or steaming. Dumplings are served as side dishes and in soups and stews.

Many national cuisines have their own kinds of dumplings. In Italian cuisine, a popular dumpling is made out of potatoes and called gnocchi. This dumpling can be served with different pasta sauces like pesto or tomato sauce or simply with melted butter and grated cheese.

Also spätzle is a popular dumpling in European cuisine, specifically in Germany, Austria, Switzerland, and Hungary. It means 'little sparrow' and may be shaped like little random, button-like bits when homemade or short, stubby noodle-like strands.

In Chinese cuisine, dim sum means 'to touch your heart' and these dumplings consist of a variety of meat, seafood and vegetable flavors and appear as steamed, stir fried and fried small dishes. Dim sum originated as a Cantonese dining custom where small, bite-sized portions of food were served as a snack at teahouses to accommodate weary travelers traveling along the famous Asian trade route called the Silk Road.

THE NOODLES OF ASIAN CUISINE

Noodles are a symbol of longevity in Chinese culture. They are incorporated in birthday and wedding celebrations. Since noodles symbolize long life, they are traditionally served long and it is considered very unlucky to cut a noodle or have it break. Noodles found in Asian cuisine can be eaten hot or cold and are used in soups, salads, stir-fries and other specialty dishes. The list provided below showcases some of the most popular kinds of noodles found in Asian cuisine.

Chinese noodles are made from flour and water or flour, water and egg. If they contain egg, they are labeled as egg noodles. Flat noodles come in a variety of widths, from very thin to nearly an inch wide. Round noodles come in a variety of thicknesses, from thin vermicelli to thicker almost spaghetti-like noodles.

Cantonese noodles are a special type of Chinese wheat noodle made by stretching a single large piece of dough in one length until it is as thin as spaghetti. Cantonese noodles are available fresh or dried.

Japanese wheat noodles come in two main varieties. Udon are thick, white noodles made from wheat flour. They are available fresh in vacuum packs or dried. The thin soba noodles are made with buckwheat in addition to wheat flour.

Rice noodles are available as very fine, hair-like noodles called rice vermicelli, and as flat noodles of various widths. Rice noodles are sometimes known as rice sticks.

Rice noodles are usually covered with hot water and soaked until tender. This soaking process takes a few minutes to a about an hour, depending on the thickness of the noodle and the temperature of the water. The noodles are drained and added to stir-fried dishes and soups at the last minute of cooking. Rice noodles are not usually boiled in water because they will become too soft and sticky. Rice vermicelli are cooked by deep-frying the dry noodles, without using any water. The noodles puff up and become crisp and tender. Rice vermicelli can also be broken apart and stir-fried, as long as enough liquid is added to the stir-fry to rehydrate them.

Bean thread noodles, also called cellophane noodles, are made with mung bean starch. They are very thin noodles that resemble rice vermicelli. Like rice noodles, they are either deep-fried or soaked in hot water until tender and then added to soups and braised dishes.



LEGUMES

A legume is...a plant that bears seed pods that split along two opposite sides when ripe.

COOKING WITH LEGUMES

Legumes have been used as food for thousands of years and they continue to play an important role in diets today. Legumes include beans, peas, lentils and a number of other plants. Legumes are incredibly versatile and are a great source of low-fat protein, insoluble and soluble fiber, folate, potassium, iron and magnesium. As an chef advocate trainee you will learn how to work with a variety of fresh and dried legumes. NOTE: We need to watch, in all modules, that this is all the same as: Chef Advocate and not chef advocate.

When fresh beans, peas and lentils have been dried after harvest, they are brittle. Rehydration—being allowed to absorb water by soaking—is necessary to be made edible. After sorting (to take out stones or other non-legume matter) and rinsing, the primary cooking method used for dried legumes is simmering. Once legumes are cooked and tender they can be used in a variety of dishes.

BEANS

The most common varieties of legumes are beans and they have a vast range of flavors, colors, sizes, shapes and uses. Buying dried beans in bulk is very economical and ecological, but fresh beans taste delicious. Some beans, like garbanzos that are usually sold dry, can be found fresh at farmer's markets. Canned beans are convenient, quick and easy to add to your diet.

Here is a selection of some of the most frequently used beans that you will come in contact with.

SHELL BEANS

Shell beans, grown for their seeds, are one of the first foods to be domesticated (grown for human use) and eaten throughout the Mediterranean and Americas. Shell beans date as far back as 9,000 B.C.E. Today, there are 500 varieties of shell beans grown around the world. The inner beans are always eaten and the outer pods are removed due to their tough texture and unpleasant taste.

Shell beans are incorporated into soups, curries, stews, chilies, salads, pastas and grain dishes. Shell beans taste great alongside poultry and fish dishes and pair nicely with the ingredients olive oil, garlic and lemon juice. They can be pureed and used in dips and spreads. Fresh shell beans are in season during late summer and early autumn and should be eaten within the first few days of purchase to avoid drying out.

The most common varieties of shell beans are:

- Fava or broad beans
- Garbanzo beans (chickpeas)
- Black beans
- Lima beans
- Kidney beans
- Pinto beans
- Soybeans
- Mung beans
- Cranberry (borlotti) beans

Medicinal qualities

- Shell beans are regarded as one of the most nutrient dense foods
- They are high in protein and dietary fiber and low in fat
- Shell beans are rich in soluble fiber
- Shell beans are a good source of vitamin B1 and thiamin
- The minerals iron and copper are found in shell beans
- Shell beans are a good source of phosphorus and magnesium
- Shell beans contain folate

Selection guidelines

- Choose fresh shell beans that feel slightly moist
- Shell beans should have flexible pods

Preparation guidelines

- Remove beans from their tough shell before cooking
- Fresh shell beans tend to cook faster than dried shell beans
- Remove beans from heat as soon as they become tender

Storage guidelines

- Store whole shell bean pods refrigerated in a plastic bag for up to three days
- If beans are already shelled, blanch beans quickly and place them in an airtight container in the refrigerator for up to five days

Fava (broad) beans

With flat, pale green colored pods and pale green colored beans, fava beans have a short season when they are available fresh. Find them in the early spring months right after harvest when they are young and tender. Fava beans have a slightly bitter flavor and for centuries have been popular in Mediterranean and Middle Eastern cuisines. Fava beans are best in creamy soups, pastas and dips. Also, fava beans are great additions to salads and grain dishes.

Garbanzo beans (chickpeas)

These beans have a nutty flavor and are round, hard, yellow-brown. Chickpeas stay firm and whole when cooked and are best known for the Middle Eastern dip, hummus, which is used as an appetizer to accompany pita bread. Hummus is a blend of chickpeas, garlic, tahini (ground sesame seeds), olive oil and spices.

Black beans

These are the beans of Latin American and Caribbean cuisines. Black beans are used in recipes for enchiladas, tacos and tamales. They make a nice a side dish to accompany meat and plantains. In Chinese cuisine, black beans are fermented and used to create a pungent black bean sauce that accompanies vegetables, poultry, fish and meat dishes.

Lima beans

Butter bean is another name for lima beans. They are flat, broad beans that range from a creamy white to pale light green color. They have a starchy texture and a distinctive flavor unlike that of any of the other beans. Lima beans are often harvested when they are immature and moist and eaten fresh.

Kidney beans

Also known as red beans, kidney beans resemble the shape and color of a human kidney. They are used in Louisiana Creole cooking and are great additions to hearty chili and stews, grain dishes and salads. Kidney beans come in different varieties and are available throughout the year, dry or canned.

Pinto beans

Beige in color with a splash/streak of reddish brown coloring, the word pinto in Spanish means ‘painted.’ They originated in Peru and are available throughout the year dried or canned. Pinto beans have a creamy texture. When cooked, their red-brown markings disappear and they become a solid pink color. Pinto beans are served with rice, soups, stews and in Mexican and Latin American cuisine. Pinto beans are most often simmered, then mashed and refried with lard or oil.

Soybeans

Soybeans are one of the world’s most important bean crops and are favored for their high protein content and rich oil content. The Japanese name edamame refers to fresh, young soybeans that have been enjoyed in Asian cuisines for centuries. Fresh edamame are usually still in the pod and are soft and edible, not hard and dry like mature soybeans. Edamame are usually boiled in water or steamed, sprinkled with salt and served whole in the pod. They can be removed from their pods and used in a variety of salad, grain and pasta dishes.

Mature soybeans are very hard and require a long cooking time, but they are not often cooked and eaten directly as with edamame. Rather, they are used to make a variety of other foods such as soy milk, soy sauce, soybean paste or miso and bean curd or tofu.

Mung beans

Mung Beans are small, round beans with a dark green skin and white interior. They are often sprouted to make the bean sprouts widely used in Asian cooking. As dried legumes, they are available whole or hulled and split. The split form of mung bean has a much shorter cooking time and breaks apart when cooked which is beneficial for making purees. Mung beans belong to the same family as pigeon peas and black-eyed peas. Mung beans around the world are regarded for their health benefits are incorporated into soups, stews, and curries. Mung and/or mung bean sprouts are also great over rice or incorporated with noodles or in spring roles. These beans can also be side dishes for meat, poultry, tofu, and vegetables dishes.

Cranberry (borlotti) beans

These beans are off white with red markings. They turn light brown when cooked. Popular in Italian and Portuguese cuisines, they have a nutty flavor and creamy texture. Cranberry beans are excellent in soups, stews and pasta dishes as well as in cold bean salads. When cranberry beans are found fresh they come in large beige and red pods and need to be shelled because of their inedible tough pod. Dried cranberry beans are more readily available than fresh and have a much longer shelf life.

Snap beans

This category holds bean varieties that are grown for harvesting both the seed and pod. They are referenced by the way they grow: on poles or runners. There are many varieties but the main ones to study for this class are:

- Green beans
- Haricots verts
- Romano beans
- Long beans

Green beans

Green beans are often referred to as snap, string or runner beans. The outside pod and the small internal beans have a mild, sweet flavor and can be eaten whole. Green bean pods shaped like thin cylinders with pointed tips. Green beans are in peak season during early to mid summer and grow to be about four inches in length. There are a wide variety of green beans available, but the most popular types are:

- Blue Flak
- Kentucky Wonder
- Roma
- Young Scarlet Runner

Haricots verts

These slim, delicate green beans are a favorite in French cuisine and have become popular at U.S. farmers’ markets.

Romano beans

These are a variety of broad green beans referred to as Italian-style green beans. They are recognized for their flat elongated pods with mildly sweet beans. Romano beans also in peak season during summer.

Long beans

Long beans are part of the black-eyed pea family and are also known as yard-long or snake beans because of their very long, rope-like pods. Long beans can grow up to three feet long and vary in color from pale green to dark green. In addition, long beans are limp in shape compared to green beans, but they both are used in Asian cuisine.

Long beans grow in subtropical climates such as Southeast Asia, Thailand, and southern China. Today, long beans can be found throughout the world during late summer and early fall.

Medicinal qualities

- These beans are an excellent source of the minerals iron, calcium, potassium and magnesium
- These legumes are a good source of dietary fiber
- Vitamins A, B2, B6, K, and C are found in these nutritious legumes
- Folate, also known as folic acid, is found in these three
- The antioxidant zinc found in these legumes

Selection guidelines

- Choose green and Romano beans that have a crisp texture and are vibrant green in color
- Select green beans that have velvety smooth pods and tips that have not been pre-cut
- Select long beans that are bright in color, free of blemishes and have pods that are flexible
- Choose green beans that have pods that easily snap when broken
- Avoid selecting green beans that have pods with bruised or discolored areas
- Avoid selecting long beans with swollen, limp, or dry looking pods
- Avoid slimy pods that may have mold

Preparation guidelines

- Rinse the pods thoroughly under cold running water
- Remove tough strings along the sides of the green beans
- Strings can be removed by breaking off the tip of each bean and pulling it along the length of the pod
- Cook the pods whole at a high temperature for a brief period of time to help keep their vibrant color

- Immediately after cooking the beans, lock in their color and crisp texture by submerging them in cold water
- Green beans are very versatile legumes and hold up well to a wide variety of hot-cooking methods
- Romano beans add great shape and texture to mixed bean salads, soups and pasta dishes
- In Italian cooking, Romano beans are mixed with bread crumbs, tomatoes and pancetta (Italian bacon)
- Green beans add color and texture to soups, stews, curries, casseroles, pastas, egg dishes and meat pies
- Green beans are good additions to nutritious salads and grain dishes
- Green beans have been used for canning and pickling because of their high nutritional value
- Green beans are excellent raw as a snack
- Green beans may be served blanched and chilled as a side dish
- Green beans are commonly used for traditional French crudité platters, sliced raw vegetables accompanied by a vinaigrette or other dipping sauce
- Green beans and long beans add sweetness and crunch to Asian noodle, rice, soup, stir-fry and tempura dishes
- Long beans are often paired with ginger, garlic, bean paste or sesame seeds in stir-fried dishes

Storage guidelines

- Store green and Romano beans wrapped in paper towels in a plastic bag for up to three days refrigerated
- Store long beans unwashed in a plastic bag refrigerated for up to five days
- To prevent mold, store beans in an open plastic bag for good air circulation

Wax beans

Wax beans are known for their vibrant yellow or dark purple color. Wax beans are closely related to green beans but have a waxy texture. They have a similar mild grassy flavor to green beans and thin cylinder shaped pods. Wax and green beans can be eaten whole—both pod and seeds. They grow up to about four inches long with tapered ends. Wax beans are in peak season during early to mid-summer.

Medicinal qualities

- Wax beans are a good source of dietary fiber and protein
- Wax beans are an excellent source of vitamin C
- Wax beans supply the body with the minerals iron and manganese

Selection guidelines

- Fresh wax beans have a crisp texture and are evenly colored with no brown spots
- Select wax beans with thin, velvety smooth pods and tips that have not been pre-cut
- Select wax beans that are deep yellow or purple in color
- Was beans should be free of blemishes with flexible pods
- Choose wax bean pods that easily snap when broken

Preparation guidelines

- When preparing wax beans, rinse the pods thoroughly under cold running water
- Remove tough strings along the sides of the wax beans
- Strings can be removed by breaking off the tip of each bean and pulling it along the length of the pod

- When preparing wax beans, it is important to cook the pods whole at a high temperature for a brief period of time to help keep their vibrant color
- Purple colored wax beans will fade slightly in color when cooked
- Wax beans are steamed, sautéed, roasted and stir-fried
- Wax beans add great shape, texture and color to mixed bean salads, soups, casseroles, grain and pasta dishes
- Wax beans pair well with potatoes, beets, corn peas
- Wax beans can be added along with or substituted for green beans
- Wax beans are tossed with lemon juice, olive oil, balsamic vinegar and aromatic spices to add depth of flavor to sides for fish, poultry and meat dishes
- Wax beans add color and texture to stews, curries and meat pies
- Wax beans are excellent raw as a snack
- Wax beans may be served blanched and chilled as a side dish
- Wax beans are used for canning and pickling because of their high nutritional value and great flavor and color
- Immediately after cooking the beans, help lock in their color and crisp texture by submerging them in an ice water bath.

Storage guidelines

- Store wax beans wrapped in paper towels in a plastic bag for up to three days, refrigerated
- To prevent mold from developing, remember to store beans in an open plastic bag for good air circulation

Dried beans

Dried beans are efficient foods. They are inexpensive, have a long shelf life when stored properly, can be cooked with only water, they provide some protein and satisfy hunger better than bread and as well as meats.

Why is it important to presoak dried beans?

Presoaking dried beans shortens their cooking time, helps improve their digestibility and reduces the enzymes that produce flatulence (gas). Most beans should be picked over to remove non-bean materials like stones or twigs, rinsed and then soaked for eight hours or overnight. Beans will grow to two or three times their original size after soaking, so use a large pot, with enough water so that they will stay covered as they expand.

After soaking, drain the beans in a colander, rinse, and then cook them in fresh water or stock. If you don't have time for a long soak, you can use the quick soak method. Bring the beans and water to a boil, then turn off the heat and let the beans sit in the hot water for one or two hours. After that, they can be drained, rinsed, and cooked in the same way as soaked beans, but they may take slightly longer to cook.

PEAS

Similar to beans, peas contain high concentrations of carbohydrates and protein but little fat. Most varieties have a naturally sweet flavor. You can purchase peas fresh, dried, frozen or canned. There are several varieties of peas—common ones are described below.

Black-eyed peas

Black-eyed peas are popular in Southern cooking as well as in parts of Africa and the Caribbean. They are not related to green or yellow peas nor to beans, but like regular peas are often sold fresh in the pod as well as dried. Black-eyed peas are small, white kidney-shaped beans with a black spot where the bean attaches to the pod.

Pigeon peas

Pigeon peas are small and round or oval, with beige skin flecked with brown coloring. They are cultivated in tropical and semitropical regions, are drought-resistant and are harvested during the region's wet season.

Split peas

Dried green and yellow peas are left on the vine until mature and dry. They are usually split, with the hull removed, in order to speed up the cooking time, although dried whole peas are also available. Split peas cook quickly without preliminary soaking and are high in protein and fiber. When preparing split peas it is important to rinse them before cooking and when split peas are finished cooking they develop a rich and thick texture. Yellow split peas tend to have a milder flavor than green split peas.

Snow peas and sugar snap peas

Snow and sugar snap peas have a sweet pleasant taste and crisp texture. Both the flat shaped snow peas and the shiny, plump shaped sugar snap peas are eaten whole with their pods.

Snow peas are also referred to as mangetouts, a French term meaning 'eat it all.' Food historians believe that snow peas originated in Asia more than 10,000 years ago and snap peas were developed later as a cross between snow peas and a strain of shell peas. Snow and sugar snap peas have the best crisp texture and sweetest flavor during the early spring when the weather is still cool, even though both pea varieties are often available through mid-summer.

Pea shoots

These are the delicate leaves and tendrils (stems or leaves with a thread-like spiral shape) that grow from the vines of the snow pea plant and are favored for their sweet flavor and tender texture. Pea shoots can also be harvested from any type of garden pea plant, but the pea shoots from snow pea plants are the most common.

Medicinal qualities

- Fresh green peas are a source of protein
- Vitamins A, B6, C, K are contained within pea varieties
- Peas contain iron, folate and manganese

Selection guidelines

- Choose snow peas that have a crisp texture and are light green in color
- Select sugar snap peas that have a crisp texture and are darker green in color
- Avoid selecting snow or sugar snap peas that have thick-skinned pods

- Choose pea shoots that are bright green in color and look fresh and crisp
- Avoid selecting pea shoots that have coarse yellow stems or damaged leaves or tendrils
- When selecting both snow and sugar snap peas, the pods should feel crisp and snap easily when broken open

Preparation guidelines

- Remove tough strings along the sides of the pea pods by breaking off the tip of each pea and pulling it along the length of the pod
- Peas are great snacks or side-dishes, additions to stir-fry dishes, pastas, grains or as topping on a salad
- Snow peas and sugar snap peas add sweetness and a crisp texture to Chinese, Vietnamese, Japanese and Thai noodle, rice, soup and stir-fry dishes
- Cook fresh pea varieties briefly to retain their sweet flavor and crisp texture
- Sugar snap peas and snow peas are served raw with dips and dressings
- Sugar snap peas are good ingredients for creamy soups, curry, pasta and grain dishes
- Thin-sliced snow peas and sugar snap peas are great additions to healthy salads
- Pea shoots can be eaten raw in salads or sautéed for pasta or fish dishes
- Pea shoots are used in Asian cuisine
- Pea shoots are stir-fried with garlic, ginger and sesame oil as a side dish
- Pea shoots match well with stir-fried seafood, other types of protein or mushrooms
- In addition, pea shoots can be wilted and added to soup near the end of the cooking process for additional texture and flavor
- Pea shoots can be used as an attractive garnish.

Storage guidelines

- Snow and sugar snap peas may be refrigerated in an airtight container for up to three days
- If peas begin to wilt while being stored, immerse them in cold water for ten to fifteen minutes to refresh the pods
- Pea shoots should be eaten within two days
- Store pea shoots in the refrigerator delicately wrapped in paper towels in an open plastic bag

Why do English peas deserve special attention?

Food historians believe peas date back to ancient times. The cultivation of peas is believed to have begun in the 1600s in England when plant breeders were developing new and improved varieties of garden peas. The Austrian monk, Gregor Mendel, performed famous plant breeding experiments on pea plants during the second half of the 1800s. Mendel discovered that certain traits in pea plants follow particular patterns and this important observation became the foundation of modern genetics. Mendel’s work with pea plants earned him the title, father of modern genetics and led to the further study of heredity (the passing of traits from parent or ancestor to offspring).

English peas are often referred to as garden, green or pod peas and have a sweet, slightly grassy flavor and slightly crunchy texture. The tough pods of English peas are inedible and must be removed before eating the peas.

In peak season during spring and early summer, English peas are best in May. They should be eaten within the first few days of purchase because once picked the natural sugars convert to starch, causing loss of sweetness.

Medicinal qualities

- Fresh English peas are rich in vitamins A, C and K
- English peas are also a good source of folate
- English peas are also a good source of calcium, iron, zinc and potassium
- English peas contain protein
- English peas are a good source of soluble fiber

Selection guidelines

- Choose English peas that have bright green and firm pods that feel swollen and heavy to the touch
- Avoid selecting pods that are pale, dull green or shriveled

Preparation guidelines

- Shell the peas right before cooking in order to prevent them from drying out
- Remove the peas from their tough outer pods
- Cook the shelled peas in simmering water for three to four minutes
- Do not overcook the peas as they will turn soggy and lose their vibrant color
- English peas are pureed and made into creamy soups and spreads
- English peas add sweet flavor and color to a variety of rice pilaf, risotto, fried rice, stir-fries and pasta dishes
- English peas taste great steamed or sautéed alongside poultry, meat and fish dishes with fresh mint or parsley
- The sweet flavor of English peas pairs nicely with salty, cured pork products.

Storage guidelines

- Store English peas refrigerated in an airtight container for up to three days

LENTILS

Lentils are a dietary staple for many people around the world. They are small, flat lens-shaped legumes that come in many varieties: brown, French green, red, yellow, black, beluga and pink.

They have a shorter cooking time than beans and do not require soaking before cooking. Lentils should be rinsed and if you want to speed up the cooking process you can presoak them. Lentils cook in about 30 minutes with a two-to-one water-to-lentil ratio.

One cup of lentils offers 18 grams of protein and 16 grams of dietary fiber. The larger in size brown lentil is the most common lentil in the West and they range in color from medium brown to greenish-brown. Red lentils have always played an important role in Indian cuisine and they are tiny, salmon-pink in color. They have been split with the dark hull removed and turn yellow when cooked. As a result of red lentils being split, they are able to break apart more easily after cooking and pureed. The favored Indian red lentil dish is called masoor dal. The term dal, or dhal is the general term used in India for dried legume. Yellow lentils are small split lentils, but are less common.

Legume Nutrient Chart (for one cup of cooked legumes)

LEGUME	PROTEIN	FIBER	IRON	MAGNESIUM
ADZUKI	17 g	17 g	4 mg	100 mg
BLACK	15 g	15 g	4 mg	140 mg
BLACK-EYED PEAS	15 g	12 g	5 mg	100 mg
CANNELLINI	15 g	11 g	5 mg	80 mg
FAVA	13 g	9 g	3 mg	90 mg
GARBANZO	15 g	13 g	6 mg	100 mg
GREAT NORTHERN	15 g	12 g	4 mg	120 mg
KIDNEY	15 g	11 g	6 mg	90 mg
LENTILS	18 g	16 g	7 mg	70 mg
LIMA	15 g	13 g	5 mg	90 mg
MUNG	14 g	15 g	3 mg	100 mg
NAVY	16 g	12 g	5 mg	110 mg
SPLIT PEAS	16 g	16 g	3 mg	70 mg
PINTO	14 g	15 g	4 mg	100 mg

•Myra Goodman (co-founder of Earthbound Farm), and Marea Goodman. Straight from the Earth. San Francisco: Chronicle Books. 2014.



Vegetarian & Vegan **COOKING**

A vegetarian diet is one consisting entirely or mostly of foods derived from plants. Vegetarians live on a diet rich in nutritious grains, legumes, nuts, seeds, vegetables and fruits, with or without the use of dairy products and eggs. The choice of vegetarianism is personal. It becomes part of a person's philosophy of life.

A vegetarian does not eat meat, poultry, game, fish, shellfish, crustaceans or any by-products of animal slaughter.

Vegetarianism is based on strong ethical, socio-economic, environmental and health beliefs and concerns. Some people decide to follow a vegetarian diet because of the unethical treatment and slaughter of animals. People become vegetarians because following a plant-based diet has significantly less of an environmental impact. Also, producing plant foods requires fewer natural resources than raising animals for meat.

Economic factors are yet another consideration when becoming a vegetarian or vegan (consumes only) plant products), because vegetables and grains on average are much less expensive than meat, poultry, and seafood. In addition, many people choose to be vegetarian due to health reasons. These diets are low in fat and cholesterol, nutrient rich and free of the hormones and drugs often used in the raising of animals for meat.

Following a vegan or vegetarian diet is a choice that is made every single day. It is the choice of a very healthy lifestyle. Even those who are not vegetarians may decide to reduce their intake of animal products in favor of eating more vegetables, healthy plant-based oils and fats and fiber.

WITHIN THE VEGETARIAN DIET, THERE ARE DISTINCT CATEGORIES. THE FORMS OF VEGETARIANISM ARE:

- Lacto-vegetarians eat dairy products in addition to plant products but will not eat other animal products
- Ovo-vegetarians eat eggs in addition to plant products
- Lacto-ovo-vegetarians eat dairy and egg products as well as plant products
- Pesco-vegetarians eat fish and plant products but not meat or poultry; they may or may not eat dairy and egg products
- Vegans eat plant products only

The vegan diet is the most restrictive form of vegetarianism. All animal products, including dairy products and eggs are off limits. Even foods like honey (because it comes from bees) or cane sugar (which may be refined with the use of animal products) may be off limits for vegans who have set strict boundaries for their food consumption.

PROTEIN AND PLANT-BASED DIETS

As a result of animal products being restricted or fully omitted from the diet of vegetarians and vegans, nutrients that are typically found in these products must be sought in plant-based foods.

The major nutritional concern of a vegetarian and vegan diet is getting enough protein.

Dairy products, eggs and fish supply adequate amounts of good quality protein, but vegans must make a specific plan to get adequate protein. A great number of plant products such as grains like quinoa, nuts such as almonds, dried beans (lentils) and other legumes (peanuts, soy beans) are a good source of protein. The combinations of rice and beans or hummus and pita bread, when eaten together, create a full- round of protein for vegetarian diets.

VITAMINS & MINERALS IN PLANT-BASED DIETS

In addition to protein, other nutrients normally found in animal products must be gained in other ways in vegetarian diets. Here are three of the most important ones.

Vitamin B12

This vitamin is found only in animal foods, including milk and eggs. Vegans must obtain it from grains such as cereals that have been fortified with this vitamin or in vitamin supplements. Vegetarians who eat eggs and drink milk are able to absorb enough of this important vitamin.

Vitamin D

This vitamin is found in fortified milk and is actually created by your skin when a exposed to sunlight. A vegetarian or vegan can gain additional vitamin D by consuming vitamin-fortified cereals and certain soy beverages.

Calcium

Dairy products are rich in calcium, but vegans and certain vegetarians who don't consume dairy products must get calcium from other sources by choosing to eat green leafy vegetables and who use dried legumes cooked in meals. Calcium supplements or calcium-fortified beverages can also be incorporated into vegetarian and vegan diets.



THE PLANT-BASED FOODS OF THE VEGETARIAN DIET

Dried legumes

Dried beans, peas and lentils are some of the most important sources of protein for vegetarians and vegans. Legumes are incredibly versatile and are also a great source of soluble and insoluble fiber, folate, potassium, iron and magnesium.

Grains

Grains are great sources of fiber and protein and are often paired with legumes or dairy products. Many vegetarians and vegans incorporate grains into their daily diet and take advantage of their high nutrient and fiber content. Wheat and corn are also important staples in a vegetarian diet and are eaten in the form of breads, noodles and tortillas.

Nuts and seeds

Nuts and seeds are rich in protein and are highly utilized in a vegetarian diet. Almonds, cashews, hazelnuts, pecans, walnuts, pistachios, pumpkin seeds, sesame seeds and sunflower seeds are favored in vegetarian cooking.

Nuts and seeds are high in fat and should be consumed in moderation. Nut butters, such as almond butter or cashew butter are nuts or seeds that have been roasted and ground to a paste. Sesame butter, or tahini, which is prominent in the Mediterranean diet is a great food product to incorporate into vegetarian cooking. The favored Mediterranean dip, hummus, is made from tahini and chickpeas and pairs nicely with fresh vegetables and bread.

Soy products

Soy products are good sources of protein and are often incorporated into a vegetarian diet. Dried soybeans are soaked to make soymilk. Then they are drained, ground, combined with water and boiled. This mixture is strained to produce a milky liquid. Plain soymilk can be used in cooking and as a beverage. Soymilk comes in a variety of flavors and can be used to sweeten beverages and desserts.

Tofu or bean curd is made by curdling soymilk—as curdled dairy milk creates cheese. The result of this process is a soft white cake with a mild, faintly bean-y flavor that accompanies many food products and sauces. Tofu is available in silken or firm varieties that are packaged in water and sealed in plastic packages. Tofu keeps well as long as it is unopened and should be used within a day or two of opening. It can be eaten cold with a light dipping sauce, stir-fried, grilled, baked in casseroles, simmered in stews and curries, put on skewers, fried, used as a garnish and incorporated into soups, salads, grain and noodle dishes.

Tempeh is a fermented soybean product that originated in Indonesia. Tempeh is sold in cakes and has a dense, meaty texture. It can be sliced or diced and braised, sautéed, stir-fried, baked and added to casseroles.

Miso, also called bean paste, is a paste made of fermented soybeans, sometimes with the addition of wheat, rice or barley, depending on the variety. There are several types of miso ranging from light, sweet and mild to dark, salty and robust. Miso can be used in soups, dressings, sauces and in a variety of cooked vegetable dishes.

Textured vegetable protein (TVP) is made from defatted soy flour, processed and dried to give it a sponge-like texture. It is available

unflavored or flavored to resemble various meats. When incorporating TVP into a recipe, prepare by mixing TVP with water and let it stand. Once TVP has softened it can be added to a recipe as any meat product. TVP is best incorporated into highly flavored or seasoned dishes because of its bland flavor. TVP is high in protein and fiber. It is free of cholesterol. Some vegetarians enjoy TVP dishes, while other vegetarians avoid it because of it is a highly processed food product.

Dairy and eggs

For lacto-ovo vegetarians, milk products and eggs are valuable sources of protein, vitamin D, calcium and other nutrients. Cheeses and eggs are high in fat and cholesterol so they should be consumed in moderation.

Vegetarian-friendly dishes using only plant products (with or without the use of dairy products or eggs):

- Stews
- Curries
- Soups
- Chili
- Salads
- Stir-fries served with rice or noodles
- Grain dishes
- Pasta
- Pizza
- Potpies
- Casseroles
- Gratins
- Stuffed vegetables

The following methods of recipe adjustment will fit a vegetarian diet:

- Remove meat, poultry and fish stocks from recipes and substitute an equal quantity of water or vegetable stock
- Omit sauces based on meat, poultry or fish stocks
- For vegans, omit sauces using dairy products or eggs
- Vinaigrettes, salsas, vegetable coulis and flavored oils are options that flavor vegetarian dishes
- For vegans, substitute oil for butter
- Substitute soymilk or other soy products for dairy products

Why is cooking seasonally important to the vegetarian?

Using produce that is in season ensures maximum nutritional value, better quality and affordability of food products. A major benefit is being able to experience fresh and more flavorful food. Shopping at locally-owned health food stores, community markets, farmers' markets or farm stands supports your personal economic landscape and as well as the farming landscapes in your locale.





SUSTAINABLE

Seafood & Fish

What can you do—as one individual—to be conscientious about the way fish exists in nature, is caught, farmed, processed, and consumed?

Learn the species you're buying, where it comes from, and how it was harvested or raised—method matters. Favor traceable sources, reputable fishmongers, and eco-certified options. Diversify beyond the usual picks to ease pressure on popular stocks, and choose resilient, low-trophic seafood like sardines, anchovies, and mussels. When possible, pick lower-impact gear (hook-and-line, traps, pots, FAD-free purse seine) and well-managed aquaculture (shellfish or recirculating systems); avoid methods tied to high bycatch or seabed damage. At home, reduce waste: plan portions, freeze properly, and use the whole fish—bones for stock, trimmings for patties or fried rice. Follow local advisories, support businesses and policies that protect waterways, and share what you learn—small, informed choices add up.

OK, LET'S GO!

FISH

Fish are cold-blooded animals that live in water, breathe with gills and usually have fins and scales.

FRESHWATER FISH

This species of fish spend most or all of their lives in fresh water such as in rivers F4Yes or hatcheries.

SEAFOOD

Any fish or shellfish used for food that are native to the sea or live in salt-water environments.



Fish used as food product is divided into two categories

FIN FISH

Fin fish are fish with fins and internal skeletons

SHELLFISH

Shellfish are fish with hard external shells but no internal bone structure such as backbones or internal skeletons

Fin Fish 101

- Fin fish have very little connective tissue and cook very quickly even at low heat
- Fin fish are very delicate and need to be cooked for the correct amount of time
- Cooked fish needs to be handled gently because it has a light and delicate texture and will fall apart or fF4Ye easily

There are two types of fin fish: lean and fat:

- Lean fish are low in fat (sole, cod, red snapper, bass, halibut, flounder) and do well with moist heat cooking methods especially poaching
- When broiling or baking lean fish, baste with butter or oil
- Lean fish may be fried or sautéed because the extra fat adds flavor
- Fat fish are high in fat (salmon, tuna, trout, butterfish, mackerel) and do well with moist heat cooking methods
- Fat fish also do well with the dry heat cooking methods of broiling and baking because they help eliminate the excessive oiliness

Fin fish fabrication

Fish can be fabricated—which means cut by a chef—into a variety of forms and portion sizes. Many food service establishments choose to purchase fish in the forms they will need for their specific menu items. These establishments believe that they can save money on purchasing prefabricated fish rather than spend time, money and resources to have their own personnel fabricate all the fish needed for service.

Today a number of food service restaurants are choosing to purchase whole fish and fabricate the fish in-house. They are willing to charge a little extra for menu items in order to cover the higher labor cost of fish fabrication. Here are some of the valuable reasons for in-house fish fabrication:

- Customers appreciate the freshness of the fish and how it has been minimally processed
- Customers can take advantage of seasonal bargains and support local fisherman and fish markets
- It's more economical for fish specialty restaurants to clean and fabricate the fish themselves because they serve a high volume of fish products

- Restaurants can make fish stocks using the bones from the fabricated fish or serve whole fish as a specialty dish on the menu

Dressing and filleting fin fish

Even though you will most likely be working with ready-to-cook fish products at a food service establishment, it is valuable to know how to dress (clean for cooking or sale) and fillet whole fish.

General procedure for dressing a fish

- Prepare to remove the scales of the fish
- Lay the fish flat on the work surface
- Rub a scaling tool or the back of a knife against the scales from tail to head
- Repeat until all the scales are removed
- Slit the belly of the fish with a knife
- Disembowel (eviscerate) by pulling out the fish's internal organs (viscera) (internal organs)
- Discard the organs and rinse the empty cavity
- Cut off the tail and fins with kitchen shears if available
- Remove the head
- Cut through the flesh just behind the gills
- Cut or break the backbone at the cut and pull off the head

General procedure for filleting a fish

There are two basic shape categories that fish are grouped into and both have different methods for filleting. The two basic shapes are flat fish and round fish.

Flatfish such as sole and flounder have lean, white flesh and a mild, delicate flavor. They are all flat with an oval shape and both eyes are on one side of the head. Flatfish have four fillets.

Procedure for filleting flatfish

- Use a thin-bladed, flexible knife and cut off the head just behind the gills (optional)
- Make a cut from head to tail just to one side of the centerline down to the backbone
- Turn the knife so it is almost parallel to the table then cut horizontally against the backbone toward the outer edge of the fish making long, smooth cuts
- Gently separate the fillet from the bone and remove the fillet completely
- Repeat filleting process to remove the three remaining fillets
- To skin the fillet, place the it skin side down on the work surface with the tail pointing toward you
- Holding the skin at the tail end, slide the knife between the skin and flesh, scraping against the skin to avoid cutting into the fillet
- Completely peel off the skin

Round fish like trout and cod have a round shape and produce two fillets versus the four fillets from flatfish.

Procedure for filleting round fish

- Cut into the top of the fish along one side of the backbone from head to tail
- Cut against the bone with smooth strokes of the knife to separate the flesh from the bone
- Cut under the flesh toward the tail and detach it
- Cut along the curved rib bones and finish detaching the fillet at the head end
- Turn fish over and repeat the filleting process in order to remove the second fillet
- Lightly run your fingers along the flesh side of the fillets to see if any bones remain

- If bones do exist, use needle nose pliers to pull out any bones
- Skin the round fish fillets the same way as for flatfish fillets
- When filleting round fish such as whole salmon it is common for the fillets to be cut into thinner slices for service portion needs

Shellfish 101

There are two classifications of shellfish, mollusks and crustaceans.

Mollusks are soft sea animals that generally fall into the three main categories of bivalves, univalves, and cephalopods.

- Bivalves have a pair of hinged shells (clams, oysters, mussels, scallops)
- Univalves have a single shell (abalone, conch)
- Cephalopods have no external shell and their name directly means ‘head-foot’ referring to the fact that these sea animals have tentacles or legs attached to their head and surrounding their mouth (octopus, squid, cuttlefish)

Crustaceans are animals with segmented shells and jointed legs (lobster, langoustines, shrimp, crab, crayfish)

Shellfish fabrication

Shellfish (both mollusks and crustaceans) have different methods of fabrication. Shellfish that have been shucked (shells removed) prior to service will not need to be fabricated by your foods service establishment. If the shellfish was received live, it needs to be fabricated for service.



SUSTAINABLE SEAFOOD AND SEAFOOD FOR THE FUTURE

WHAT IS SUSTAINABILITY?

The United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) explains that sustainability is based on a simple principle that “everything that we need for our survival and well-being depends, either directly or indirectly, on our natural environment. Sustainability creates and maintains the conditions under which

humans and nature can exist in productive harmony, that permit fulfilling the social, economic, and other requirements of present and future generations.”*

*<http://www.epa.gov/sustainability/basicinfo.htm>

YEAR ROUND			
Albacore	Mackerel, Pacific	Sablefish	Thornyhead,
Clams	Mussels	Shark, Pacific	Longspine
Crab, Rock	Oysters	Thresher	Thornyhead,
Halibut, California	Prawn, Spot	Sole	Shortspine
Lingcod	Rockfish	Squid, CA Market	Urchin, Red
SPRING	SUMMER	FALL	WINTER
Crab, Dungeness	Crab, Dungeness	Crab, Dungeness	Crab, Dungeness
Halibut, Pacific	Halibut, California	Halibut, Pacific	Lobster, CA Spiny
Prawn, Ridgeback	Halibut, Pacific	Lobster, CA Spiny	Prawn, Ridgeback
Salmon, Pacific	Prawn, CA Spot	Prawn, Ridgeback	Seabass, White
Shrimp, Coonstripe	Salmon, Pacific	Salmon, Pacific	Shark, Pacific
Shrimp, Pink	Seabass, White	Seabass, White	Thresher
Swordfish, CA	Shrimp, Coonstripe	Shark, Pacific	Swordfish, CA
Whelk, Kellet’s	Shrimp, Pink	Thresher	Whelk, Kellet’s
	Swordfish, CA	Shrimp, Coonstripe	
	Tuna, Albacore	Shrimp, Pink	
	Yellowtail	Swordfish, CA	
		Tuna, Albacore	
		Whelk, Kellet’s	
		Yellowtail	



SUSTAINABLE SEAFOOD

Sustainable seafood is defined as seafood species that are caught or farmed in a way that ensures the long-term health and stability of that species, as well as the greater marine ecosystem. It is vital that both individuals and community groups be advocates for sustainable seafood practices.

Producers and distributors should follow these practices in order to ensure that the world’s shellfish and sea fish population and its diversified ecosystem will be preserved for the enjoyment of current and future generations.

The common cooking methods for seafood are: grilling, steaming, sautéing, stewing, boiling, frying and poaching. Fresh herbs, spices, aromatic vegetables, pork products, citrus and butter can be added to provide additional flavor depth to seafood dishes. As you learn about the different seafood varieties commonly used in cooking fish, shellfish and crustaceans it will be up to you to understand the key issues affecting Earth’s marine environment.

The three main issues that trouble our marine environment are

- Overfishing
- Bycatch
- Habitat Damage

Here are some shocking facts about overfishing, bycatch, and habitat damage from the Vancouver Aquarium:

Overfishing

With an estimated 90 percent of all large, predatory fish already gone from our world’s oceans since industrialized fishing began, we are now fishing the last 10 percent of species such as tunas, swordfish and sharks. Quite simply our marine species cannot reproduce fast enough to keep up with the hunt.

Bycatch

An estimated 25 percent of what is caught in commercial fisheries is unintended catch, known as bycatch, and discarded. Bycatch can include unmarketable species, undersized species and endangered species. The majority of bycatch animals that are tossed back overboard do not survive.

Habitat Damage

Certain fishing and farming practices can have negative impacts on marine habitats like coral reefs, kelp forests, mangroves and wetlands. With the loss of crucial habitats such as spawning, nursery, breeding or sheltering areas, many species have a hard time surviving.

*<http://www.oceanwise.ca/about/sustainable-seafood>

The issues of bycatch and habitat damage are directly connected to the type of fishing or farming methods used. Certain fishing techniques are commonly associated with high bycatch such as bottom trawling, dredging, and pelagic longlining.

The method of trawling involves sweeping a strong fishing net on the bottom the sea floor. Trawling is done repeatedly in the same area, which leaves no time for re-growth or recovery of the sea life and ecosystem.

The method of dredging rakes the ocean’s bottom habitat. This action creates a disturbance in the seabed in order to sift out the targeted species, typically shellfish.

Pelagic longlining is a method of commercial fishing where a fishing line that ranges from one to more than 50 miles long is strung with smaller lines of baited hooks that dangle at spaced intervals in order to catch fish near

the sea’s surface. These baited hooks often attract endangered sea turtles, sharks and other fish, resulting in wasteful bycatch. Also, when the line is deployed into the water, it is common for seabirds to dive for the bait and become entangled in the hooks and drown.

Sustainable fishing techniques associated with low bycatch include trolling hook and line pot and traps. These methods are explained below.

Trolling is to catch fish by towing a lure or baited hook behind a slow moving boat.

Hook and line pots are small moveable traps that are constructed either of wooden slats or coated wire mesh. They are enclosed baskets or boxes that are set from a boat or by hand in order to trap seafood.

Traps are large structures fixed to the shore, designed to allow fish to enter and not escape. Chambers and funnels may be placed in traps in order to keep the fish from escaping.

Aquaculture, also known as fish or shellfish farming, is described by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) as “the breeding, rearing, and harvesting of plants and animals in all types of water environments, including ponds, rivers, F4Yes, and the ocean.”*

If done in a sustainable manner, aquaculture can take pressure off of marine species in the wild so they can replenish and be preserved. The Vancouver Aquarium states that today “One third of the world’s seafood production comes from aquaculture.”* Sustainably farmed options include shellfish such as scallops, mussels, clams and oysters, which are farmed on lines or trays suspended from rafts and are more sustainable than their wild counterparts.*

*http://www.seafoodwatch.org/cr/cr_seafoodwatch/content/media/MBA_SeafoodWatch_Longlining&PurseSeiningFactCards.pdf

*http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/aquaculture/what_is_aquaculture.html

*<http://www.oceanwise.ca/about/sustainable-seafood>

Seafood for the future

Seafood for the Future (SFF) is a non-profit seafood advisory and promotional program of the Aquarium of the Pacific. SFF’s mission is to promote healthy and responsible seafood choices. Seafood for the Future has a strong network of committed businesses, restaurants, non-profits, distributors and producers that are focused on providing better seafood choices from well-managed fisheries and farms.



Food Preservation

TECHNIQUES

Preserving food lets you enjoy produce and proteins even when they're out of season, cuts waste, and stretches your budget. Simple methods—freezing, canning, drying, pickling, and fermenting—keep food safe and tasty for months.

Blanch vegetables before freezing to lock in color and nutrients; make jams or tomato sauce by canning; dehydrate fruit for snacks; pickle cucumbers or onions for quick flavor; and ferment cabbage into sauerkraut or kimchi for probiotics.

Always use clean containers, follow a trusted recipe, and label with the contents and date so you rotate older items first.

FOOD PRESERVATION TECHNIQUES



PICKLING

Pickling is food preservation technique that has been practiced worldwide for eons. Foods are preserved in salt, salt water (brine) or vinegar. Over thousands of years, pickling has been practiced in order to secure surplus food supplies for long winters, famine and other times of need.

The technique of pickling has the ability to preserve, but it can also change the overall taste and texture of the food product. Food historians say that the evolution of diversely pickled foods in different cultures has contributed to unique cultural food preferences such as spicy-sour tastes in Southeast Asia and acidic flavors in Eastern Europe. You might sample kosher cucumber

pickles in New York City, chutneys in India, kimchi in Korea, salted duck eggs in China, pickled herring in Scandinavia, corned beef in Ireland, salsas in Mexico, miso pickles in Japan and pickled pigs feet in the southern United States.

"IN A PICKLE?" THE TRUTH ABOUT PICKLES

Pickles are foods soaked in solutions that prevent spoilage. There are two basic categories of pickles.

The first type includes pickles that are preserved in vinegar, a strong acid in which few bacteria can survive. Most of the bottled kosher cucumber pickles available in the supermarket are preserved in vinegar.

The second type includes pickles that are soaked in a salt, or brine to encourage fermentation. Fermentation means the growth of 'good' bacteria that makes a food less vulnerable to spoilage caused by 'bad' bacteria. Many of the cucumber dill pickles sold are fermented pickles. The popular Korean vegetable dish kimchi is made by fermentation.

APPRECIATING KIMCHI

Kimchi is a traditional spicy fermented vegetable dish that is usually made from cabbage. There are hundreds of kimchi varieties that use different ingredients ranging from cucumbers to radishes to eggplants. Kimchi is packed full of vitamins A, B and C. One of the biggest health benefits of kimchi is its 'healthy bacteria' called lactobacilli, found in fermented foods like yogurt. This 'good' bacteria helps with digestion and can help prevent certain infections.

FERMENTATION

When you ferment a food, you encourage growth of 'good' microorganisms in it, while preventing growth of spoilage- causing microorganisms. Doing this, and being successful, may require special ingredients and carefully controlled conditions, such as temperature and pH. By the 'good' microorganisms eating spoilage-sensitive parts of the food, and releasing chemicals as a by-product, the microorganisms help preserve the food, and change its flavor and texture in interesting ways.

WHAT DO PICKLED, BREADS, YOGURTS, WINES, BEERS AND CHEESES HAVE IN COMMON?

All of these foods are made by fermentation! Here is a look at how fermentation affects some foods.

Bread

Yeast added to dough digest sugars (derived from starches in dough) and produces carbon dioxide, causing the dough to rise.

Cheese

Milk bacteria digest the milk sugar lactose and produce lactic acid, which acts with the added enzyme rennet to curdle the milk. The cheese maker drains off the whey and compacts the curds which various microbes then ripen into a mature cheese.

Wines

Yeasts, added to crushed grapes, eat the grapes' sugars and produce alcohol.

CANNING FOR FOOD PRESERVATION

Canning is the process of applying heat to food sealed in glass or metal (commercial canning) in order to destroy any microorganisms that cause food spoilage. Canning preserves the food. Proper canning techniques stop spoilage because food is heated for a specific period of time to kill microorganisms. During the canning process, air is driven from the jar and a vacuum forms as the jar cools and seals. Although you may hear of many canning methods, there are only two methods that are approved by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA). The methods are water-bath canning and pressure canning.

WATER-BATH CANNING

This method, sometimes referred to as hot water canning, uses a large kettle of boiling water. Filled jars are submerged in the water and heated to an internal temperature of 212 degrees Fahrenheit for a specific period of time. Use this method for processing high-acid foods, such as fruit or items made from fruit such as jams, jellies, butters; cucumber pickles; spaghetti sauce without meat; other pickled foods and tomatoes.

PRESSURE CANNING

This method uses a large kettle that produces steam in a locked compartment. The filled jars in the kettle reach an internal temperature of 240 degrees Fahrenheit under a specific pressure (stated in pounds) that's measured with a dial gauge or weighted gauge on the pressure-canner cover. Use a pressure canner for processing vegetables and other low-acid foods, such as meat, poultry, many kinds of vegetables and fish.

One of the risks of canning is *Clostridium botulinum*, bacteria that causes an illness known as botulism. Botulism is a type of food poisoning that may be fatal. A pressure canner must be used for foods low in acid to prevent the risk of botulism because the higher heat is sufficient to kill the organism.

DRYING FOODS FOR PRESERVATION

Drying is the oldest method known for preserving food. To dry food, you expose it to a temperature that is high enough to remove the moisture but low enough so that it doesn't cook. Good air circulation assists with even drying. An electric dehydrator is the best and most efficient unit for drying, or dehydrating, food. Today's units include

a thermostat and fan to help regulate temperatures much better. You can also dry food in your oven or by using the heat of the sun, but the process will take longer and produce inferior results to food dried in a dehydrator.

FREEZING FOODS FOR PRESERVATION

Freezing foods is an art. To properly freeze foods at the peak of freshness, follow proper techniques of preparing, packaging and freezing. Most fresh vegetables and fruits, meats and fish, breads and cakes, clear soups and casseroles can be frozen.

The keys to freezing food are making sure it's absolutely fresh, that it is packaged to prevent freezer burn, that it is frozen as quickly as possible and then kept at the proper temperature (32 degrees Fahrenheit).

Use freezer paper or freezer containers to hold foods to be frozen. These prevent deterioration of quality. Damage occurs when food comes in contact with the dry air of a freezer so it is important to wrap food tight. Do not overfill the freezer because cold air circulation will be reduced and freezer burn damage will occur. Although freezer-damaged food won't hurt the person who consumes it, there will be a negative effect on the flavor of the food.

FOLLOW THESE GENERAL GUIDELINES FOR EACH FOOD TYPE

- To freeze fresh vegetables (especially tomatoes), wash, blanch (and remove skins if necessary), dry, lay out on a pan, freeze
- When frozen, place into freezer containers
- Clear soups and casseroles may be frozen in glass containers with lids
- Wrap meats and fish well in freezer paper
- Breads and cakes may be stored in plastic freezer bags or containers
- Label all frozen food with the date it went into frozen storage and follow the use-by dates



The Recipes



At The Wellness Companion Hub, we believe food should be more than just fuel—it's an opportunity to feel nourished, get creative, and connect with your wellbeing. Our recipe collection is designed to help students explore flavors that are both delicious and diverse.

From quick snacks to balanced meals, these recipes are simple, cost conscious, and flexible. Each month, you'll discover new recipes to spark inspiration, expand your cooking skills, and celebrate the connection between food, culture, and community.

Endless thanks to our amazing and evolving recipe contributors—your flavors, stories, and creativity make this space come alive.

**NOW IT'S TIME
TO BRING IT
ALL TOGETHER.**

**LET'S GET
COOKING!**

CHIA-LICIOUS GOOD TIMES:

AKA CHIA SEED PUDDING

This creamy chia seed pudding delivers steady, long-lasting energy for body and brain, with gut-loving fiber and anti-inflammatory nutrients. It's a gentle, blood-sugar-friendly way to start the day—or keep it going.

INGREDIENTS

- 1 cup milk of choice
(Oat, Coconut, Almond, Soy)
- 1/4 cup chia seeds
- 1 tsp vanilla extract
- 1 tbsp maple syrup
(honey or agave works as well)
- 1 pinch salt (optional)

PREP 'N' STEPS

1. In a sealable container, shake together the milk, vanilla extract, sweetener, and salt.
2. Add the chia seeds and mix well for about 2 minutes, stirring intermittently to prevent clumping.
3. Cover and refrigerate for 30 minutes to 1 hour, or until thickened.
4. Stir before serving and enjoy!

MAKE IT FUN!

- Chocolate Chia Pudding: Add 4 tbsp cocoa powder.
- Creamy & Fruity: Mix in 1/4 cup yogurt and top with 1/2 cup granola and fresh fruit (passionfruit & blueberries recommended!).
- PB&J Twist: Stir in 3 tbsp peanut butter and 2 tbsp jam.





SWEET POTATO HASH

Crispy, caramelized, and deeply satisfying, this sweet potato hash turns simple roots, onions, and warm spices into a hearty skillet meal—perfect for breakfast and actually, just as good for dinner.

INGREDIENTS

- 1 large sweet potato, cut into small cubes
- ½ red onion, diced
- ½ red bell pepper, chopped
- ¾ cup spinach (optional)
- ½ tsp garlic powder (or more to taste)
- ½ tsp chili powder (or more to taste)
- Salt, to taste
- Black pepper, to taste
- 1 tbsp olive oil

PREP 'N' STEPS

- Heat the Pan:** In a medium non-stick skillet, heat the olive oil over medium heat.
- Sauté the Aromatics:** Add the diced red onion and cook for about 1 minute until slightly softened. Add the sweet potato cubes, red bell pepper, garlic powder, chili powder, salt, and pepper. Stir to combine.
- Cook the Hash:** Cover the skillet with a lid and let the mixture cook for 5 minutes, stirring occasionally. After 5 minutes, check if the sweet potatoes are tender. If not, cover and cook for an additional 3 minutes, repeating until fully cooked through.
- Add the Greens (Optional):** Once the sweet potatoes are tender and lightly browned, stir in the spinach and cook for 1–2 more minutes, until wilted.
- Serve & Enjoy:** Serve warm with scrambled eggs and toast, or tuck into a lettuce wrap for a lighter option.

HARVEST HASH TOFU EDITION

Golden-crisp tofu meets hearty roots and fall vegetables in this cozy harvest hash—a protein-packed, skillet-ready meal that sets the day up in just the right way.

INGREDIENTS

- 1 pack of firm tofu (14–16 oz)
- 1 red bell pepper, diced
- ½ red onion, diced
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 2 cups spinach
- 2 baked potatoes, cut into cubes (optional, but great for added carbs)
- 1–2 tablespoons olive oil
- ¼–½ teaspoon turmeric (use ½ tsp for stronger flavor)
- ¼ teaspoon chili powder
- Pinch of black pepper
- Salt, to taste

PREP 'N' STEPS

- 1. Prep the tofu:** Wrap the tofu in paper towels and place a heavy plate or pan on top. Let it press for about 10 minutes to remove excess moisture.
- 2. Sauté the veggies:** While the tofu drains, heat olive oil in a medium-sized pan over medium heat. Add the diced onion and red bell pepper, sprinkle with a little salt, and cook for about 3 minutes.
- 3. Add the potatoes:** Stir in the cubed baked potatoes. If omitting potatoes, continue cooking the vegetables for 5 minutes instead. With potatoes, cook for an additional 5 minutes, stirring occasionally.
- 4. Add garlic and spinach:** Stir in the minced garlic and cook for 30 seconds until fragrant. Add the spinach, cover the pan, and let steam for 1–2 minutes until wilted.
- 5. Crumble in tofu:** Unwrap and crumble the pressed tofu directly into the pan. Stir to combine.
- 6. Season:** Add turmeric, chili powder, black pepper, and salt to taste. Add a spoonful of water to help distribute the spices evenly.
- 7. Cook and finish:** Let everything cook for 7–8 minutes, stirring occasionally, until the tofu and potatoes begin to brown slightly.
- 8. Serve hot:** Plate and enjoy on its own or with toast, avocado, or your favorite sauce.



BANANA OAT PANCAKES

Fluffy, lightly sweet, and secretly wholesome, these banana oat pancakes blend ripe bananas and whole oats into a golden stack that's naturally sweet, fiber-rich, and perfect for that slow-burn breakfast energy.

INGREDIENTS

½ cup milk of choice

1 egg

1½ cups rolled oats

2 ripe bananas

2 tsp baking powder

Pinch of salt

1 tsp vanilla extract

½ tsp cinnamon (optional)

1 tbsp butter (for cooking)

PREP 'N' STEPS

1. **Blend the Batter:** In a blender, combine the milk, egg, oats, bananas, baking powder, salt, vanilla, and cinnamon (if using). Blend until smooth and well combined.
2. **Cook the Pancakes:** Heat the butter in a non-stick skillet over medium heat. Pour the batter into the pan to form small pancakes (about ¼ cup per pancake). Cook for 2–4 minutes, until bubbles form and the edges look set. Flip and cook for another 2–3 minutes, or until golden brown and cooked through.
3. **Serve & Enjoy:** Plate the pancakes warm and serve with your favorite toppings—maple syrup, fresh fruit, nut butter, or yogurt all pair beautifully.

FRESH QUINOA SALAD

Bright and crisp, this fresh quinoa salad tosses fluffy quinoa with bell pepper, red onion, cucumber, and sweet snap peas, then finishes with a drizzle of olive oil, tangy feta, and a pop of cilantro. It's a crunchy-tender, herby bite that's light and satisfying.

INGREDIENTS

For the Salad:

- 1 cup quinoa, rinsed
- 2 cups water
- 1 teaspoon olive oil
- 1 bell pepper, chopped
- ½ red onion, diced
- ½ cucumber, chopped
- ⅓ cup sugar snap peas, chopped
- Feta cheese, to taste
- Chopped cilantro, to taste

For the Dressing:

- ⅓ cup olive oil
- 2 ½ tablespoons apple cider vinegar or white wine vinegar
- 1 tablespoon honey or agave
- Salt, to taste

PREP 'N' STEPS

1. **Cook the Quinoa:** Rinse the quinoa thoroughly under cold water. In a medium saucepan, bring 2 cups of water and 1 teaspoon of olive oil to a boil. Stir in the quinoa, reduce heat to low, cover, and let it simmer for 10–15 minutes until all water is absorbed. Remove from heat and let it cool slightly.
2. **Assemble the Salad:** In a large bowl, combine the cooked quinoa, chopped bell pepper, red onion, cucumber, sugar snap peas, feta cheese, and cilantro.
3. **Make the Dressing:** In a small bowl or jar, whisk together olive oil, vinegar, honey, and salt until well combined.
4. **Combine & Chill:** Pour the dressing over the salad and toss to coat evenly. Cover and refrigerate for at least 1 hour to allow flavors to meld.
5. **Serve & Enjoy:** Give the salad a final toss before serving.

Enjoy chilled or at room temperature as a refreshing side or a light main dish!

FAJITA VEGGIE STIR FRY WITH RICE & BEANS

Sizzling with fajita-style peppers, red onion, and a hint of jalapeño heat, this quick stir fry tosses chili, cumin, and garlic through tender rice and hearty black beans. A vibrant, weeknight-easy bowl that's satisfying, and naturally fiber-rich.

INGREDIENTS

2 bell peppers, diced (green and yellow recommended)

1 large red onion, diced

1 jalapeño, diced
(keep seeds for extra spice)

1 cup rice

2 cups water

Splash of oil

1 can black beans, rinsed

4 tsp chili powder

1 tsp cumin

4 tsp garlic powder

Salt and black pepper, to taste

2 tbsp olive oil

PREP 'N' STEPS

1. **Cook the Rice:** In a pot, bring 2 cups of water and a splash of oil to a boil. Add the rice, reduce heat, and let simmer for about 20 minutes until liquid is absorbed.
2. **Sauté the Veggies:** In a medium pan, heat 2 tbsp of olive oil over medium heat. Add diced red onion and sauté for 2 minutes. Stir in bell peppers and jalapeño. Season with 2 tsp chili powder, 2 tsp garlic powder, and all the cumin. Add salt and black pepper to taste. Cook for 6-8 minutes until vegetables are tender.
3. **Prepare the Black Beans:** In a small pot, heat the black beans over medium heat for 2 minutes. Stir in remaining 2 tsp chili powder and 2 tsp garlic powder. Add salt and black pepper to taste. Cook for an additional 6 minutes, stirring occasionally.
4. **Assemble the Bowl:** In a bowl, layer rice, sautéed veggies, and black beans. Top with your favorite toppings such as cheese, avocado, tomato, and salsa.

THAI CURRY

Aromatic and silky, this Thai red curry simmers onion, bell pepper, mushrooms, and carrots in coconut milk with tofu or meat. Red curry paste, ginger, and garlic bring heat; tamari (or fish sauce), a touch of sugar, and lime/kaffir leaves bring balance for a comforting meal.

INGREDIENTS

1 tbsp olive oil
 1 white onion, diced
 1 red bell pepper, cut into thin strips
 ½ cup thinly sliced button mushrooms (or 1 cup Thai eggplant, cut into small cubes)
 2 carrots, peeled and thinly sliced
 1 ½ cloves garlic, minced
 1 tsp ginger, grated
 Salt to taste
 1 cup tofu or meat of choice (precooked)
 2 tbsp red Thai curry paste (Mae Ploy or Aroy-D recommended)
 1 can coconut milk (or coconut cream for a richer texture)
 ¼ - ⅓ cup water (adjust for preferred consistency)
 1 cup kale, washed and thinly sliced
 1 tbsp tamari (or 1 tbsp fish sauce for a more authentic taste)
 1 tsp rice vinegar (or 1 tsp tamarind paste for tanginess)
 1 tsp coconut sugar (or adjust to taste)
 1-2 Thai bird's eye chilies, sliced (optional for more heat)
 3-4 kaffir lime leaves, torn (or zest of 1 lime)
 ⅓ cup Thai basil, plus extra for garnish
 Lime wedges, for serving
 Optional: Bamboo shoots, for added texture

PREP 'N' STEPS

- 1. Prepare the Rice:** In a medium saucepan, bring 2 cups of water to a boil. Add a splash of olive oil and a pinch of salt. Stir in the rice once the water reaches a boil. Bring the water back to a boil, then reduce the heat to low. Cover the saucepan with a lid. Let the rice simmer for about 18-20 minutes until the rice is soft and fluffy.
- 2. Prepare the Curry:** In a large pan, heat olive oil over medium heat. Add the diced onion and cook for 2 minutes. Then add the red bell pepper, mushrooms (or eggplant), and carrots, and cook for an additional 5 minutes.
- Add the garlic and grated ginger, cooking for 30 seconds. Stir in the red Thai curry paste, cooking for another 2 minutes.
- Pour in the coconut milk (or coconut cream) and ¼ cup of water. Let the curry simmer for 10-15 minutes until the vegetables are tender and the flavors have melded together. Add the kaffir lime leaves (or lime zest) and kale.
- Stir in tamari (or fish sauce), tamarind paste, and coconut sugar. Taste and adjust the seasoning, adding more sugar or tamari if necessary. If you prefer more heat, add sliced bird's eye chilies.
- Remove from heat and stir in fresh Thai basil. Discard the kaffir lime leaves before serving.
- 7. Serve:** Serve the curry over the cooked rice, garnished with extra Thai basil, fresh lime wedges, and optional chili flakes for added heat. For an added texture, serve with bamboo shoots.



PACKED PEPPERS

Colorful bell peppers are packed with a savory mix of ground protein, onion, celery, carrots, and kale—seasoned to taste—then folded with rice, topped with cheese, and baked until the peppers are tender and the tops are toasty. A splash of olive oil, plus salt and black pepper, brings it all together for a hearty, weeknight-ready bake.

INGREDIENTS

- 3 whole bell peppers
- 1 lb ground protein of choice (lean beef, turkey, chicken, pork, or plant-based)
- 1 small onion, finely diced
- 1 large stalk celery, finely diced
- 2 carrots, finely diced
- 4 oz kale, finely chopped
- 2 cloves garlic, minced (or 1 tsp garlic powder)
- 1 tbsp tomato paste
- 1 tbsp Worcestershire sauce
- 1 tbsp mustard (Dijon if you have it)
- 1 cup cooked rice (or grits)
- 4–5 oz cheese, sliced or grated
- 1 tbsp mild olive oil or avocado oil (if not using a non-stick pan)
- Salt & black pepper, to taste

PREP 'N' STEPS

1. Preheat oven to 375°F.
2. Halve bell peppers lengthwise from stem to tip; remove seeds and any white ribs.
3. Prep vegetables: finely dice onion, celery, and carrots; chop kale and set aside.
4. Heat a large non-stick skillet over medium to medium-high heat. Add ground protein and cook, breaking it up, until browned with a few crispy bits. (If not using non-stick, add oil first.) Transfer meat to a large bowl and add the cooked rice.
5. Return skillet to medium heat. Add onion, celery, and carrots; sauté, stirring often, until beginning to soften and take on color.
6. Stir in garlic, tomato paste, Worcestershire, mustard, kale, salt, and pepper. Cook 2–5 minutes more until fragrant and well combined.
7. Add the vegetable mixture to the bowl with the meat and rice; mix well.
8. Stuff the pepper halves, keeping the filling level on top, and set them in a baking dish or on a sheet pan. Top evenly with cheese.
9. Bake 30 minutes, until peppers are tender but still hold their shape and the cheese is melted and toasty. Serve hot.

HOT STUFF HUMMUS

This is a great base recipe for hummus. Feel free to add your favorite flavors - pesto sauce and sun-dried tomatoes are flavorful additions. You can also experiment and add anything to jazz it up and make it your own!

INGREDIENTS

1 x 16oz can Garbanzo Beans (Chickpeas)

1 Tbsp Tahini paste

1 - 2 tsp lemon juice

1/2 tsp cumin

2 cloves Garlic

2 Tbps Olive Oil

1 heaping Tbsp Chili crunch paste

Salt & Pepper

PREP 'N' STEPS

1. Open the can of garbanzo beans, drain and rinse
2. Set aside the chili paste. Add the rinsed beans and the rest of the ingredients to a blender and blend until very smooth.
3. Taste for seasoning. Adjust the lemon juice, salt, pepper, or tahini paste to your liking.
4. Remove from the blender to a food storage container. stir in the reserved chili crunch paste until well incorporated.



WHAT IS:

Food Sustainability

Food sustainability is about making choices that support both people and the planet. It means growing, preparing, and sharing food in ways that protect natural resources, respect workers and animals, and ensure everyone has access to fresh, nutritious, and affordable meals.

Sustainable food is often locally grown, culturally meaningful, and produced with care for the environment. By practicing food sustainability, communities can build healthier lives today while protecting the earth and its resources for future generations.

FOOD RECOVERY 101: THE "REAL COST" OF FOOD

HOW WOULD YOU DEFINE THE REAL COST OF FOOD?

By the price you pay for it in the grocery store? In a restaurant?

Food cost starts at its source—farms and fields. Food costs include planting, cultivating and harvesting by workers at farms, management of animals for meat, management of cows at dairies; processing and packaging foods at factories; food transportation costs, purchase by grocery stores for consumption by individuals; purchase and processing of foods by restaurants for their patrons.

WHAT IS FOOD RECOVERY?

Food recovery encourages the collection and distribution of surplus food by nonprofit organizations to feed the hungry and poor.

The four most common methods of food recovery are:

Field gleaning: The collection of crops left in farmers' fields after harvest or from fields where it is not economically profitable to harvest

Perishable food rescue or salvage: The collection of perishable produce from wholesale and retail sources

Food rescue: The collection of prepared foods from the food service industry

Nonperishable food collection: The collection of processed foods with long shelf lives (e.g. canned goods)

There is a dire need for food recovery to take place in this nation because "52 percent of fruits and vegetables are wasted from farm to fork in North America" according to the Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC).

WHY DO WE NEED TO PRACTICE FOOD RECOVERY?

California's farmlands span 25 million acres, and produce nearly half of the nation's fruits, vegetables and nuts, but millions of tons of the state's edible produce never make it to the market. The NRDC projects that "reducing food losses by just 15 percent would be enough food to feed more than 25 million Americans every year at a time when one in six Americans lack a secure supply of food to their tables. according to the Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC).

References:

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California

Reducing YOUR CARBON FOOTPRINT

WHAT IS YOUR CARBON FOOTPRINT?

Carbon dioxide is a greenhouse gas that directly contributes to global warming and, ultimately, climate change. Your carbon footprint is the estimated amount of carbon dioxide (CO₂) that you directly and indirectly contribute to the environment each year. As food travels through the different parts of the food delivery system, fossil fuels used in transportation, processing, retail, storage and preparation stages produce carbon dioxide (CO₂) emissions. Methane and nitrous oxide are also greenhouse gases that are generated during farming and food production stages. High levels of greenhouse gas emissions leave a harmful effects.

WHY DO WE NEED TO REDUCE OUR CARBON FOOTPRINT?

The NRDC explains that “getting food from the farm to our fork eats up 10 percent of the total U.S. energy budget, uses 50 percent of U.S. land, and swallows 80 percent of all freshwater consumed in the United States.” This surplus of uneaten food that ends up rotting in landfills accounts for the largest source of municipal solid waste in the U.S. and contributes to high levels of methane emissions. When we purchase out-of-season fruits and vegetables that have traveled thousands of miles to get to our table, the carbon footprint can be astronomical. That is why it is so important to support local farmers and take low (or sometimes no-cost) produce and create dishes that are nutritional, tasty and beautiful.

HOW DO WE REDUCE OUR CARBON FOOTPRINT?

Purchasing produce from local purveyors will help save money and will reduce your carbon footprint on the environment. In addition, buying locally sourced food provides you with fresher products that taste better. Buying organic produce and meat can also help with reducing your carbon footprint because large amounts of fossil fuel go into the making of fertilizers.

The Grace Communications Foundation states, “Livestock production alone contributes to 18 percent of the global warming effect—more than emissions from every single car, train, and plane on the planet.”



REDUCING FOOD WASTE & PROTECTING FOOD DONORS

THE BILL EMERSON GOOD SAMARITAN FOOD DONATION ACT

FOOD WASTE: THE SHOCKING TRUTH

According to the Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC), 40 percent of food in the U.S. goes to waste every year. The average American throws away between \$28 and \$43 in the form of roughly 20 pounds of food every month. If the U.S. reduced its food waste by only 15 percent, it would be enough to feed 25 million Americans!

To break it down, 20 percent of vegetables, 15 percent of fruit and five percent of miscellaneous food product is wasted annually. Before passage of the federal Bill Emerson Good Samaritan Food Donation Act, donors were often fearful of being held liable for donating food products to nonprofit organizations. This law has the potential to change the way this nation views food waste and empower our food donation partners.

WHY IS THE BILL EMERSON GOOD SAMARITAN FOOD DONATION ACT IMPORTANT?

This visionary act was signed into law on October 1, 1996 by President Bill Clinton to protect food donors and recipient agencies from the risk of legal liability. The Bill Emerson Act encourages the donation of healthy food and grocery products to hunger fighting nonprofits in a creative attempt to reuse food that would otherwise go to waste. Representative Bill Emerson was a strong advocate for this law—yet he died before it was passed.

WHO IS PROTECTED?

The law protects individuals, corporations, partnerships, organizations, associations, governmental entities, wholesalers, retailers, restaurateurs, caterers, farmers, gleaners and nonprofit agencies that choose to donate food in “good faith.”

WHAT DOES THIS LAW ACCOMPLISH?

- Protects food donors from liability when donating to a nonprofit organization
- Protects food donors from civil and criminal liability should donated food product cause harm to the recipient, so long as it was given in “good faith”
- Standardizes donor liability exposure by providing uniform language that protects regional and national donors from civil and criminal liability
- Establishes a distinction of “gross negligence” or intentional misconduct for individuals or groups that donate food or grocery products not in “good faith” (gross negligence is defined as “voluntary and conscious conduct by a person with knowledge—at the time of conduct—that the conduct is likely to be harmful to the health or well-being of another person”)

WHAT TYPE OF FOOD PRODUCT IS PROTECTED?

Food and grocery products that meet all federal, state and local quality and labeling standards are protected, even if the food product may not be “readily marketable due to appearance, age, freshness, grade, size, surplus or other conditions.”



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