



Seasonal Foods - December 2010

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Seasons

Seasons form the natural backdrop for eating. All of the World's Healthiest Foods are seasonal; now just imagine a vegetable garden in the dead of winter. Now imagine this same garden on a sunny, summer day. How different things are during these two seasons of the year! Changes in growing conditions from spring to summer or autumn to winter are considered essential for balancing the earth's resources and its life forms. But today it's so easy for us to forget about seasons when we eat! Modern food processing and worldwide distribution of food make foods available year-round, and supermarket's shelves look much the same in December as they do in July.

Research supporting 'Seasonal Eating'

In a research study conducted in 1997 by the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food in London, England, significant differences were found in the nutrient content of pasteurized milk in summer versus winter. Iodine was higher in the winter; beta-carotene was higher in the summer. The Ministry discovered that these differences in milk composition were primarily due to differences in the diets of the cows. With more salt-preserved foods in winter and more fresh plants in the summer, cows ended up producing nutritionally different milks during the two seasons. Similarly, researchers in Japan found three-fold differences in the vitamin C content of spinach harvested in summer versus winter.

Warming foods

Yes, it is colder outside, and we need some hearty foods to stay warm. Nothing is more satisfying on a brisk wintry day than a hearty hot bowl of soup or a lovely casserole or hotpot (see recipes below). Winter and especially this time of the year is perfect for getting together with friends and family, relaxing with a hearty meal.

When you want to warm up fast we turn toward warming foods and all of the animal foods tend to fall into the warming category including fish, chicken, beef and lamb, as well as most of the root vegetables, including carrots, potato, onions and garlic - also eggs, corn and nuts.

What are the benefits of eating foods in Season?

Buying foods that are in season tend to have the most flavour, nutritional value and most affordable. They haven't been flown in from far away countries, where they may lose some of their flavour and nutritional value. Also saves on the carbon footprint.

Support your local producers

For the greatest freshness look for foods that are locally grown and freshly picked; maybe at your local greengrocers, local farmers market, local farms or using the seasonal box delivery service provided by some organic farms.

Example of box delivery by [Riverford's Organic Vegetables/Fruits](#)

Seasonal box: £12. 45

- Carrots UK
- Onions UK
- Brussels sprouts stalks UK
- Butternut squash UK
- Portobello mushrooms UK
- Calabrese broccoli ES
- Beetroot UK
- Black kale UK

Large box contents: £17. 15

- White potatoes UK
- Carrots UK
- Shallots NL
- Parsnips UK
- Cauliflower UK
- Jerusalem artichokes UK
- Portobello mushrooms UK

- Calabrese broccoli ES
- Red /green peppers ES
- Leeks UK
- Aborigines ES
- Black kale UK

Winter Nutritional guide

Eat high-quality Carbohydrates

Listen to your cravings - there is a reason for them! In the winter, with fewer sunny hours, your stored serotonin (the "feel-good" brain chemical) starts to decline. Your cravings for carbohydrate-loaded comfort foods are your body's cries for more serotonin. But be careful when choosing carbohydrates to boost serotonin! Opt for nutritious whole grains - brown rice, wild rice, whole wheat, oatmeal, barley, rye, bulgar, quinoa. and choose high-quality carbohydrates such as sweet potatoes, pumpkins, carrots and squashes.

Love seasonal produce

Winter produce may not be as exciting and colorful as summer berries, but there are still many healthy choices available. Work seasonal produce such as, cranberries, citrus fruits, oranges and root vegetables into your meals. You'll not only add color to your plate, you'll pack in some serious nutrition punch.

Consider Vitamin D supplements

If you live in the northern hemisphere or wear sunscreen all the time, consider taking Vitamin D supplement. Numerous studies have shown that oral intake of 1000 IU Vitamin D can reduce the risk of colon, breast, and ovarian cancers by as much as 50 percent. Vitamin D can be found in fortified dairy products, fatty fish, and egg yolks.

Nourish your cold

Despite numerous claims you may have heard, no diet remedy or supplement has scientifically proved effective at preventing cold and flu. However, studies have shown that 1,000 mg of Vitamin C supplements may make your cold milder and shorter.