

4 Reasons to Eat With the Seasons

Birds are singing, flowers are blooming, action-packed blockbusters are opening, and ah, yes...the allergies are attacking! This could all mean only one thing: Spring has sprung! And along with the tulips and azaleas, delicious fruits and vegetables like strawberries and Swiss chard are bursting from the soil, eager to be transported to a grocery store or farmers' market near you.

If you don't typically buy in-season produce, here are the top four reasons why you should consider starting this spring:

1. Great for Your Wallet

- Seasonal foods don't require nearly as much effort to produce as out-of-season produce. Many in-seasonal foods can grow virtually on their own, which of course requires far less labor and time than procuring food out of season.
- Also noteworthy, when foods are in season, there's more of them! You may find some great supermarket deals as well as two-for-one offers!
- When foods are grown in hot houses or another part of the world, the taste will inevitably be affected. Anyone who has tasted a dark red August tomato, fresh off the vine, and compared it with a sickly-looking winter wannabe knows what I'm talking about!

2. Great for Your Taste Buds

- Foods that are chilled and handled frequently while being shipped lose flavor with every mile. Fresh and locally harvested foods keep their rich flavors intact.
- In addition, I personally think pumpkin pie at Thanksgiving is infinitely more satisfying and enjoyable

than it would be, say, on the 4th of July. Tastes and smells do, after all, have the mysterious ability to conjure vivid memories.

3. Great for Your Body

- When fruits and vegetables are left to ripen on the plant, they will contain more nutrients and offer far better flavor than food that is harvested early and ripened artificially.
- Seasonal foods have fewer chemicals. Foods that have been picked too early and travel long distances won't look as appealing as the seasonal ones that grew to their peak. So, to make them look more attractive, they're often injected with chemical ripening agents, wax coatings, and other preservatives. Yuck!

Fit Fact: Eating spinach in season provides up to three times more Vitamin C than eating it out of season.

4. Great for Our Planet

- Seasonal and local foods travel much shorter distances than non-local fruits and vegetables, which may have to go thousands of miles to get to our local supermarkets. Food that is air-mile free means less or even no emissions were involved to get it into our freezers and fridges.

Okay, time to go shopping! Here's a list of in-season foods that are ripe for the picking this spring:

May

Apricots, artichokes, asparagus, cherries, lettuce, mangoes, okra, pineapples, radishes, rhubarb, spring peas, strawberries, Swiss chard, zucchini

June

Apricots, blueberries, cantaloupe, cherries, kiwi, lettuce, mangoes, peaches, strawberries, Swiss chard, watermelon, zucchini

The Dirty Dozen

Below is a list of the 12 most contaminated fruits and vegetables according to the Environmental Working Group. So, whether you're on a budget and need to prioritize your organic purchases, or you would simply like to know which type of produce has the highest pesticide residues, this is a great help:

- Peaches
- Apples
- Sweet Bell Peppers
- Celery
- Nectarines
- Strawberries
- Cherries
- Pears
- Grapes (Imported)
- Spinach
- Lettuce
- Potatoes

Stay Fit, stay faithful.

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