

Aging Healthfully Newsletter

Illinois Department on Aging



Fall into Healthy Eating Habits

What comes to mind when you think of autumn? More than likely you think of all the beautiful colors of leaves changing in the fall. **You may also get excited for the variety of delicious seasonal produce available such as pumpkins, squash, apples, sweet potatoes, and pears.**

When planning what to eat or preparing meals, it is smart to think about all the colors and produce in season this time of year and to include them in your meals and snacks!

These fruits and vegetables vary in the types and amounts of vitamins and minerals, but because they are in season, not only do they taste the very best, but they contain a higher amount of nutrients compared to when they are not in season.

One thing is certain, these healthy harvest fruits and vegetables are packed with nutrition and flavor!

Did You Know...

- ✓ **Acorn Squash** is a type of winter squash named for its' acorn-like shape. A plain acorn squash is fat-free, saturated fat-free, cholesterol free, sodium free, and is a good source of vitamin C! Acorn squash can be found in a variety of colors including: dark green, yellow, tan, and orange.
- ✓ **Asian Pears** are meant to be hard and do not soften (unlike traditional pear varieties) and are ready to eat when purchased. They are a good source of fiber with 4 grams in a medium sized fruit.
- ✓ **Delicata Squash** can be stored for up to 3 months in a cool dry place! It is an excellent source of vitamin A, a good source of vitamin C, and contains only 40 calories in 1 cup.
- ✓ **Kale** is an earthy tasting green. Choose baby kale for a milder flavor or add it to soups and stews to cut down on the strong bitter flavor. It is an excellent source of both vitamins A and C and is also a good source of calcium and potassium.
- ✓ **Pomegranate** are a powerhouse of nutrients like potassium, folate, copper, vitamin C and vitamin K. Just one half of a fruit contains 6 grams of fiber, which is considered an excellent source. Use as a crunchy topping on salads, roasted squash, or in fruit salads to add color and texture.

How to Select, Ripen, and Store Fall/Winter Seasonal Produce:



Acorn Squash (a Winter Squash):

- ✓ Acorn squash is at its' peak from early Fall through Winter.
- ✓ Choose a squash that feels heavy & has a hard, smooth surface with a bright colored rind.
- ✓ Squash can be stored in a paper bag in the fridge for up to 1 week or in a cool dry place for a few weeks. Don't store in a plastic bag, it can trap moisture & spoil your squash.
- ✓ Wash the outside of the squash just before use. Acorn squash can be baked, steamed, boiled or stuffed.
- ✓ Slice it in half lengthwise and scoop out the seeds – Place flesh side down on a baking sheet sprayed with olive or canola oil and bake until soft. Can be made sweet or savory.

Asian pear:

- ✓ Asian pears are available year-round, but are at their peak from late Summer through the Fall.
- ✓ Choose fragrant, unblemished Asian pears with little to no brown spots.
- ✓ Ripe Asian pears are hard and do not become soft like other pears – they are ready to eat when purchased.
- ✓ They can be stored at room temperature for up to 1 week or up to 3 months in the fridge!

Butternut Squash (a Winter Squash):

- ✓ Butternut squash peaks from early Fall through Winter.
- ✓ Choose a squash that feels heavy & has a hard, smooth surface with a nice tan brown colored skin.
- ✓ Squash can be stored in a paper bag in the fridge for up to 1 week or in a cool dry place for a few weeks. Don't store in a plastic bag, it can trap moisture & spoil your squash.
- ✓ Wash the outside of the squash just before use. Butternut squash can be baked, steamed, boiled or pureed as a sauce.
- ✓ Slice it in half lengthwise and scoop out the seeds – remove skin, cube butternut squash and boil in a large pot of water then drain and puree squash with low sodium chicken broth, parmesan cheese and spices to use as a pasta sauce.

Pomegranate:

- ✓ Pomegranates are usually available from the Fall through early Winter.
- ✓ Choose pomegranates that are bright, plump, round and heavy for their size. Avoid any with a dry-looking, wrinkled, or a cracked rind.
- ✓ Store in a cool place at room temperature for up to 3 days or in the fridge for up to 2 months.
- ✓ Cut the outer skin and tap out seeds from the cream-colored, inedible membrane or use your fingers to loosen the arils. You can eat the whole pomegranate seed (aka arils) or just the juice.



October is National Seafood Month



The American Heart Association recommends eating fish and/or seafood at least twice a week - especially fish or seafood that contain higher amounts of heart-healthy omega-3 fats such as salmon or tuna. This is also recommended by the 2015 Dietary Guidelines for Americans.

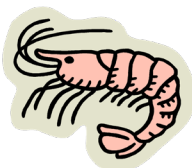
The average American does not meet the recommended amount of omega-3 fatty acids in their diet.

In the U.S., health organizations recommend a daily EPA and DHA intake of 250 mg for the general population and 1000 mg for people with heart disease. **Talk with your Primary Care Physician or a Registered Dietitian to determine if your diet is meeting the current recommendation.**

Seafood Facts:

- Health benefits of eating seafood far outweigh the risks from contaminants that consumers are often concerned about such as trace amounts of mercury.
- The most commonly consumed seafood in the United States present very little risk from contaminants like mercury while offering many health and nutrition benefits.
- Research shows that removing seafood from the diet can have a negative effect on a person's health.
- Fish and seafood are good sources of protein for older adults!
- Unlike other animal proteins they are not high in saturated fat, which has been shown to increase a person's risk for heart disease.
- Eating more fish and seafood does not have to be costly – canned and frozen forms are relatively inexpensive and can be incorporated into a variety of quick recipes.
 - For example, canned salmon, crab, and tuna can be made into patties, casseroles, added to fresh salads, and used in many other ways.
- Canned fish and seafood that is packed in water or a reduced sodium variety can be included in a heart healthy recipe.
- The body absorbs nutrients like omega-3 fats better from a food source rather than from a supplement, so you are better off eating the food than taking a supplement in most cases.

If you are not a fan of seafood, perhaps you just have not had it prepared in a way you like yet! So, step out of your comfort zone this month and give fish and/or seafood another chance!



Top Benefits of Consuming Fish and/or Seafood:

- ✓ Seafood provides heart healthy fats like polyunsaturated and omega-3 fatty acids, which have been shown to help our brain, heart, and immune system.
- ✓ Fish and seafood cooks very quickly compared to other proteins, which means dinner is on the table sooner!
- ✓ When prepared with little to no added fats, seafood contains the least amount of calories per ounce compared to any other protein (i.e. beef, pork, poultry).
- ✓ Research has shown that the omega-3 fatty acids in seafood may even help reduce your chance of developing type 2 diabetes and help to lower blood pressure in people that have hypertension (also known as high blood pressure).
- ✓ Eating fish and seafood on a regular basis has been shown to help ease the symptoms of rheumatoid arthritis (RA) and even help to prevent osteoarthritis.
- ✓ The omega-3's in fish and seafood have been shown to help ease the symptoms of psoriasis and eczema as well as protect our skin from harmful UV rays!

What counts as a one-ounce equivalent of protein if someone does not eat meat, poultry, fish, or seafood?

- 1 large egg
- 1-ounce cheese (nutritionally equivalent measure of pasteurized process cheese, cheese food, cheese spread, or other cheese product)
- ¼ cup cooked dried beans, peas, or lentils
- 1 tablespoon peanut butter or ½ ounce nuts
- ¼ cup tofu (about 2 ounces)
- 1oz tempeh, cooked
- 1 ounce of soy type burger



Note: A one-ounce serving, or equivalent portion of meat, poultry, or fish may be served in combination with other high protein foods.

Attachments:

- How to Select Fall and Winter Seasonal Produce
- 3 Reasons to Eat More Seafood
- Seafood for Health (Tri-fold brochure)
- Seafood Cooking Guide
- Seafood Supermarket Tour (Activity Idea – would need to arrange for transportation to the Supermarket)
- October Recipes: Apple Cider Poached Pears; Pumpkin and Black Bean Stew

References:

<https://fruitsandveggies.org/fruits-and-veggies/>

<http://seafoodhealthfacts.org>

<https://health.gov/news/blog/2017/03/five-strategies-for-encouraging-seafood-consumption-what-health-professionals-need-to-know/>

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<https://www2.illinois.gov/aging/CommunityServices/nutrition/Pages/nutrition.aspx>