

Enjoying What's In Season

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Spring is a time of new beginnings and endless possibilities. Temperatures begin to rise, the days get longer, plants start to bloom, and beautiful colors abound in both the produce aisle and your local farmer's market. Choosing in-season fruits and vegetables that are grown in your region means your produce hasn't had to travel a long distance to your table. As a result, it's fresher, tastes better, is better for the environment, and typically costs less money. But these items don't have to be locally grown in order to be terrific. Aside from being beautiful, the fruits and vegetables of spring and summer pack a big nutritional punch. Here's just a small snapshot of some of the spring and summer fruits and vegetables grown right here in West Virginia, and their nutritional benefits:



Strawberries – Good source of vitamin C, potassium, and fiber.

Blueberries – Good source of vitamin C, vitamin K, manganese, copper, and fiber.

Spinach – High in potassium and vitamin C. Good source of vitamin A, iron, and fiber.

Carrots – High in beta-carotene and vitamin A. Good source of fiber.

Broccoli – Good source of vitamin A, folate, iron, calcium, and fiber.

Tomatoes – High in vitamin C and vitamin K. Good source of vitamin A, potassium, manganese, folate, and fiber.

Green Beans – High in vitamin C, vitamin K, folate, and fiber. Good source of calcium, potassium, and magnesium.

Peppers – High in vitamin B6, vitamin A, and vitamin C. Good source of potassium, vitamin E, and fiber.

Cucumbers – High in vitamin K and molybdenum. Good source of vitamin C, magnesium, potassium, and phosphorous.

Snap Peas – High in vitamin C, vitamin K, manganese, and fiber. Good source of protein, folate, and zinc.

It's great to buy fresh fruits and veggies but if they go bad before you've even had a chance to think about using them it doesn't do you any good. Here's a run-down of where specific produce items should be stored to maximize freshness and taste:

In the Refrigerator: Berries, Cherries, Cut Fruit, Asparagus, Cabbage, Mushrooms, Green Beans, Carrots, Peas, Beets, Cauliflower, Radishes, Broccoli, Leafy Greens, Spinach, Summer Squash, Corn

Ripen on the Counter, Then Refrigerate: Avocados, Kiwi, Peaches, Pears, Nectarines, Plums

Room Temperature Only: Apples, Bananas, Citrus Fruits, Melons, Pineapple, Cucumber, Potatoes, Eggplant, Tomatoes, Garlic, Onions, Peppers

Be on the lookout for farmer's markets in your area and get to know the individual farmers/vendors. They are a great resource for information about the products they grow—how to pick, store, cook, and enjoy them. Most of the time they are more than eager to share this knowledge with you! For more information about shopping at the farmers market check out <http://www.eatright.org/Public/content.aspx?id=6442470665&terms=farmers%20market> or talk to a registered dietitian in your area.



Melody is a dietetic intern at WVU Healthcare and member of the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics. She plans to become a registered dietitian. As the nation's food and nutrition experts, registered dietitians are committed to improving the health of their communities. To find a registered dietitian in your area, visit www.eatright.org and click on "Find a Registered Dietitian."