

What Fruits and Vegetables are in Season?

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As we move through December, many of us are reaching for our Instant Pots or Crock Pots, ready to cook up a warm and comforting dish. Butternut squash soup and turkey chili are two of my favorites. If you're seeing more squash, beets, kale, and Brussels sprouts at the grocery store, there's a reason why. These produce items are in season around late fall through the winter.

Have you noticed certain fruits and vegetables taste so much better when they're in season? Imagine biting into a crisp green apple in the fall or a ripe red tomato in the summer. Choosing seasonal produce doesn't only offer stronger flavors, it's also a great way to save money while eating healthy. Every few weeks, I love making a special trip out to the farmers market to pick up a few seasonal items and support local farmers. If you're in the Raleigh-Durham area, here's a few farmers markets to try.

- [Durham Farmers Market](#)
- [North Carolina State Farmers Public Market](#)
- [Cary Downtown Farmers Market](#)
- [Apex Farmers Market](#)
- [Carrboro Farmers Market](#)

Wondering what's currently in season? Below you'll find a list of winter vegetables and fruits, along with some nutrition facts about each.

Winter vegetables

- Pumpkin
 - Have you heard of beta-carotene? This term is commonly used when people talk about carrots, but it's also present in pumpkins. Beta-carotene is what gives these foods their bold orange color. It's also great for our vision and contributes to healthy skin.
- Beets
 - What are beets exactly? Beets are a root vegetable that have become more popular as people started using them in juices. Beets are rich in betaine, a type of antioxidant that brings out their deep red and purple color.
- Kale
 - Just like beets, kale has become an increasingly popular staple as people started using it in smoothies and other health conscious dishes. There are many types of kale, but curly kale is the most common and probably the one you're used to eating or seeing in your grocery store. Kale is known for its high levels of vitamins A, K, B6 and C.
- Swiss chard
 - I don't have much experience cooking with swiss chard, but one cup contains 44% of your recommended daily value of vitamin A!
- Carrot
 - We've heard a lot about vitamin A so far. That's because vitamin A is found in carotenoids, which give fruits and vegetables their deep colors. One carrot supplies you with 200% of your daily recommended value of vitamin A.
- Brussel sprouts



- Brussel sprouts are a type of cruciferous vegetable. Studies show that cruciferous veggies (cauliflower, cabbage, kale, garden cress, bok choy, broccoli, Brussels sprout) are connected to a decreased risk in diabetes.

Winter fruits

- Kiwi
 - Kiwis are known for their high concentration of fiber, but did you know some people eat the skin? Consuming the kiwi skin increases the fiber content by 50%! Kiwi skin is also a great source of vitamin C and E.
- Citrus
 - Citrus fruits, like grapefruits, oranges, and lemons, thrive in the winter months. Navel oranges are best in December all the way through March.
- Persimmon
 - Persimmons are something you may not be familiar with. A persimmon looks almost like a tomato, but orange. Persimmons are native to China, but can be found at most grocery stores.
- Nuts: hazelnuts, walnuts, almonds
 - Nuts are a great source of plant based protein and monounsaturated fat (the good kind). Nuts are great for lowering your LDL levels (bad cholesterol), which reduces risk for heart disease.



Winter Recipes

Below are some flavorful winter recipes that incorporate some of the produce mentioned above as well as some additional ones.

[Pumpkin Pasta Sauce](#)

This delicious pumpkin recipe comes from Shuangy's Kitchen Sink blog. I love this recipe because it's dairy free and uses cashews and pumpkin- things you'd never expect to find in pasta sauce!



[Potato Leek Soup](#)

If you're unfamiliar with leeks, they are a winter vegetable similar to an onion, garlic, shallot, or chive and go wonderfully with potatoes in a savory, creamy soup.



[Butternut Squash Hummus](#)

Looking for a recipe with bold flavor? This hummus includes cumin and paprika, plus the rich and rustic flavor of roasted butternut squash.



[Red Velvet Cake Smoothie](#)

Don't judge a book by its cover! I know "smoothie" and "beet" probably aren't two foods you'd pair together, but I made this smoothie and it came out phenomenal. I wouldn't say it tastes exactly like Red Velvet cake, for obvious texture reasons, but it's still quite delicious and an unusual way to enjoy beets.



[Baked Carrot Fries with Garlic Avocado Aioli](#)

Add more veggies to your diet with this simple and easy baked carrot fries recipe!



[Kiwi Chia Pudding](#)

Have you heard of chia seed pudding? Chia seeds absorb liquid, like water or milk. When mixed with liquid and left overnight, you'll end up with a consistency very similar to pudding and just as tasty. Here's a recipe incorporating kiwis into your chia seed pudding.



Resources

- <https://snaped.fns.usda.gov/seasonal-produce-guide>
- <https://www.eatright.org/food/nutrition/healthy-eating/9-fall-produce-picks-to-add-to-your-plate>
- <https://www.osfhealthcare.org/blog/9-reasons-to-add-pumpkin/>
- <https://www.usda.gov/media/blog/2019/10/08/pumped-pumpkin>
- <https://www.mindbodygreen.com/0-4807/10-Reasons-To-Eat-Whats-In-Season.html>
- <https://www.mayoclinichealthsystem.org/hometown-health/speaking-of-health/the-many-types-and-health-benefits-of-kale>
- <https://www.healthline.com/nutrition/eating-kiwi-skin#antioxidants>
- <https://shuangskitchensink.com/healthy-pumpkin-pasta-sauce-vegan-paleo/>
- <https://minimalistbaker.com/red-velvet-cake-smoothie/>
- <https://drhyman.com/blog/2018/05/08/baked-everything-carrot-fries-with-garlic-avocado-aioli/>
- <https://unepetitecuisiniere.com/kiwi-chia-pudding-vegan/>
- <https://www.thehealthymaven.com/roasted-butternut-squash-hummus/>
- <https://www.platingsandpairings.com/healthier-creamy-potato-leek-soup/>
- <https://www.splendidtable.org/story/2002/11/03/smoked-prosciutto-fuyu-persimmons-with-balsamic-vinegar-extra-virgin-olive-oil> (persimmon photo)
- <https://www.readersdigest.ca/food/healthy-food/health-benefits-of-beets/> (beets photo)
- <https://www.wozupi.com/blog/recipe/swiss-chard> (swiss chard photo)