



Sample the Season

Most Americans do not eat the recommended amounts of fruits and vegetables

On average, Americans eat more than the recommended amount of meat, eggs, nuts, and grains, but fall far short of the recommended consumption of vegetables, dairy, and fruit. Most adults need 1 ½-2 ½ cups of fruit and 2-4 cups of vegetables each day, but only 1 out of every 10 American adults regularly meets those recommendations.

Impact of buying local on healthy eating

Buying local foods from direct-to-consumer (DTC) options include purchasing food from farmers markets, farm stands, [CSAs](#), and other DTC options. Researchers have found that people who buy from DTC outlets are more likely to engage in several healthy practices, including having their own vegetable garden, being aware of the MyPlate campaign to promote federal dietary guidelines, and searching the internet for information on healthy eating. People who bought from DTC outlets were also more likely to rate the healthfulness of their family's diet as excellent or very good.

Benefits of eating fruits and vegetables

Eating a diet rich in fruits and vegetables can:

- Lower the risk of heart disease, stroke, and some types of cancer
- Lower the risk of eye and digestive problems
- Lower the risk of weight gain
- Increases sources of vitamins, minerals, and fiber
- Reduce high blood pressure



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What's in season?

- **Spring:** Asparagus, peas, lettuce, spinach, radishes, rhubarb, strawberries, onions, cabbages, sour cherries, sprouts, squash
- **Summer:** Cauliflower, broccoli, tomatoes, cucumbers, green beans, melon, berries, apples, eggplant, nectarines, okra, peaches, potatoes, garlic, carrots, turnips, peppers, beets, sweet corn, raspberries, blueberries
- **Fall:** Winter squash, sweet corn, beets, turnips, apples, pears, salad greens, green beans, rutabaga, gourds, pumpkins, parsnips, pears, apples, grapes
- **Winter:** Winter squash, cabbage, collard greens, potatoes, beets

Trying something new?

Consider different ways to use new or unfamiliar produce. Include new foods with:

- Vegetable trays
- Spiralized noodles
- Pizzas
- Smoothies
- Omelets
- Pesto
- Stir-fry



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Planning the Menu

You won't always know what will be available at the farmers market or in your CSA boxes week-to-week. Here are two options to plan around uncertainty:

1. Plan the menu first before you arrive at the farmers market. Plan the non-vegetable portion of your meals, such as the meat or main protein, then add the vegetable portion after seeing what looks best as the market.

2. Shop first and then plan your menu. Use what you find at the farmers market as inspiration for your weekly meals. This helps ensure you use what you buy and can reduce food waste (as long as you get the chance to use it before it goes bad).

Resources

- [Illinois – What's in Season](#), University of Illinois Extension
- [Seasonal Produce Guide](#), USDA
- [2020-2025 Dietary Guidelines for Americans](#)
- [Fruit and Veggie Color List](#), Fruits and Veggies

References

[Vegetables and Fruits](#), Harvard T. H. Chan School of Public Health

[Households that buy fruits and vegetables directly from farmers tend to possess health-oriented attitudes and behaviors](#), USDA

[Ask an Expert: Six Tips for Planning Menus around Farmers Market Selections](#), Utah State University Extension

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Fennel, Baby Arugula and Apple Salad

- Juice of ½ a lemon
- Juice of ½ an orange
- 1 Tablespoon cider vinegar
- 1 teaspoon Dijon mustard
- ½ cup red onion, chopped
- ½ teaspoon sugar
- ¼ teaspoon salt
- 3 Tablespoons olive oil
- 1 small bulb fennel with top
- 1 cup walnut pieces, toasted
- 1 tart apple
- 5 ounces arugula



Whisk together juices, vinegar, mustard, red onion, sugar, salt, and oil. Set aside. Cut the stalks and fronds off top of fennel bulb and cut off bottom end of fennel bulb. Pinch off a small handful of the fronds and coarsely chop; reserve for later. Cut fennel bulb in half lengthwise and remove the core. Slice fennel crosswise as thinly as possible. Core the apple and slice as thinly as possible. In a large salad bowl, toss fennel and apple slices with arugula. Pour dressing over top of salad and top with walnuts and reserved fennel fronds.

Yield 6 servings (1 cup each)

Nutrition Facts (per serving): 290 calories, 25 grams fat, 260 milligrams sodium, 16 grams carbohydrate, 5 grams fiber, 5 grams protein

Kale Salad with Apples

- 2 Tablespoons fresh lemon juice
- 1/8 teaspoon salt
- 1 garlic clove, minced
- 1 teaspoon Dijon mustard
- ¼ cup olive oil
- 4 cups finely chopped kale, ribs removed
- 2 Tablespoons toasted sliced almonds
- 1 sweet apple, cored and sliced thin
- 2 Tablespoons grated Parmesan cheese



Combine lemon juice, salt, garlic, mustard and oil in a large glass bowl; whisk well. Add kale. Using clean hands, massage dressing into kale. Toss with almonds and apples. Sprinkle with Parmesan cheese. Refrigerate and serve.

Yield: 4 servings

Nutrition Facts (per serving): 180 calories, 17 grams fat, 150 milligrams sodium, 8 grams carbohydrate, 2 grams fiber, 2 grams protein

8 Minute Baby Bok Choy

- 2 Tablespoons toasted sesame oil
- 2 garlic cloves, minced
- 1 teaspoon grated fresh ginger
- ½ teaspoon red pepper flakes (optional)
- 1 ½ lb. baby bok choy, cut in half length-wise
- 1 Tablespoon low-sodium soy sauce
- 1 Tablespoon water
- 1 teaspoon sesame seeds

In large sauté pan, heat sesame oil over medium-high heat. Add garlic, ginger, and red pepper flakes. Stir constantly for 20-30 seconds. Add bok choy, flat parts down to oil mixture, cooking for 2 minutes until bottoms are golden brown. Pour soy sauce and water over bok choy. Cover with tight fitting lid. Cook for an additional 2 minutes. Uncover and cook until greens wilt and stalks are tender, approximately 3 minutes more. Remove from heat. Sprinkle with sesame seeds.

Yield 4 servings

Nutrition Facts (per serving): 90 calories, 7 grams fat, 250 milligrams sodium, 5 grams carbohydrate, 2 grams fiber, 2 grams protein

Collard Greens

- 2 slices turkey bacon
- ½ large onion, chopped
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 lb. collard greens, stems removed, chopped
- 1 can (14.25 oz.) no added salt chicken broth
- 2 cups water
- 1 teaspoon apple cider vinegar
- 2 teaspoons brown sugar



In a large saucepan, cook the bacon until desired crispiness. Leaving the bacon grease, remove bacon and chop into pieces; set aside. Sauté onion and garlic in bacon grease 2-3 minutes. Add chopped greens, broth, water, vinegar, brown sugar and chopped bacon. Bring to a boil; reduce heat and simmer for 1 hour or until greens are tender.

Yield: 4 servings

Nutrition Facts (per serving): 70 calories, 1 gram fat, 135 milligrams sodium, 9 grams carbohydrate, 3 grams fiber, 6 grams protein

Roasted Beets

- 2 lb. or about 6 medium beets
- 1 Tablespoon olive oil
- ¼ teaspoon salt



Preheat oven to 400°F. Peel and chop beets. Spread the beets on a rimmed baking sheet. Drizzle with oil and stir to coat the beets. Sprinkle with salt and stir again to distribute evenly. Roast in the oven for 35-45 minutes, until the beets are soft and starting to get crispy. If you do not want crispy beets, cook them for a shorter period of time.

Yield: 6 servings

Nutrition Facts (per serving): 80 calories, 2.5 grams fat, 210 milligrams sodium, 14 grams carbohydrate, 4 grams fiber, 2 grams protein

Basil Cucumber Corn Salad

- 4-5 ears sweet corn (about 3 cups corn)
- 1 large cucumber, peeled, seeded and chopped
- ½ cup basil, chopped
- 1 green onion, chopped
- 2 Tablespoons light mayonnaise or nonfat plain Greek yogurt
- Salt and pepper to taste

Shuck the corn and remove the silk. Rinse corn under water. Fill a large stock pot at least half full with water. Bring the water to a boil. Add the corn on the cob. Cover and return to boil; boil for 5 minutes. Turn off heat and remove cobs with tongs to a cutting board to cool. Cut corn off the cob. In a large bowl, combine, corn, cucumber, basil, onion, mayonnaise or Greek yogurt and salt and pepper. Stir well. Store covered in the refrigerator for at least 2 hours before serving.

Yield: 8 servings, ½ cup each

Nutrition Facts (per serving): 90 calories, 1 gram fat, 35 milligrams sodium, 18 grams carbohydrate, 3 grams fiber, 4 grams protein