

NUTRITION

Enjoy the Fruits (and Vegetables) of the Season

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Summer's bounty offers an incredible variety of nutritious and delicious produce that can significantly enhance your diet. Here are key strategies for making the most of seasonal fruits and vegetables:

- **Peak Nutrition.** Fresh, in-season produce contains the highest levels of vitamins, minerals, and antioxidants. Summer fruits like berries, stone fruits, and melons are at their nutritional peak right now, while vegetables like tomatoes, zucchini, and corn offer maximum flavor and nutrients.
- **Storage and Preparation Tips.** Store most summer fruits at room temperature until ripe, then refrigerate to extend freshness. Keep vegetables like tomatoes and peppers out of the refrigerator for better flavor retention. Wash produce just before eating rather than in advance to prevent premature spoilage.
- **Maximizing Variety and Color.** Aim for a rainbow of colors on your plate – the diverse pigments in summer produce provide different antioxidants and phytonutrients. Red tomatoes and watermelon offer lycopene, orange peaches and carrots provide beta-carotene, and purple eggplant and berries contain anthocyanins.
- **Preparation Methods.** Raw preparations often preserve the most nutrients, making summer perfect for fresh salads, fruit bowls, and gazpacho. Light cooking methods like grilling, roasting, or quick sautéing can enhance the absorption of certain nutrients while maintaining others.
- **Hydration Benefits.** Many summer fruits and vegetables have high water content – watermelon, cucumbers, tomatoes, and zucchini can contribute significantly to your daily fluid intake while providing essential nutrients.
- **Preservation for Later.** Consider freezing berries, blanching and freezing vegetables, or making fresh salsas and sauces to extend the season's nutrition into fall and winter months.

The key is eating a wide variety of seasonal produce while it's at its peak quality and incorporating it into meals in ways that preserve both nutrition and enjoyment.



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