

## **Buy Fresh, Eat Fresh, Live Well, Save Money**

It's summertime and all over the country, fresh fruits and vegetables are in abundance at farmer's markets and local produce stands. Here in Washington state we have fresh food markets in virtually every Seattle neighborhood!

Did you know that only about 32% of Americans eat enough vegetables? And less than that – about 28% - eat enough fruit (research at Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health). Eating locally and fresh doesn't have to be time consuming or expensive. Here's a quick "101" course on the basics of fresh produce.

Although we import many fresh fruits and vegetables from Canada, Mexico, Central and South America, fresh produce is available in all 50 states. Some states stand out for the large volume they produce – Florida oranges, Washington apples, Maine or Idaho potatoes.

Fruits and veggies are one of the best nutritional deals going. They are low in calories, and rich in vitamins, minerals and fiber. Eating a fruit/veggie rich diet may help reduce your risk of stroke, type 2 diabetes, coronary heart disease and certain cancers.

The Dietary Guidelines for Americans recommends eating 2 ½ cups (3 to 5 servings) of vegetables and 2 cups (2 to 4 servings) of fruits daily. These amounts will vary depending on age, gender and activity level. A moderately active 40 year old woman should consume 4 cups of fruits/vegetables a day, while a man in his 40's who is active should consume about 5 cups.

The National Cancer Institute recommends eating at least one serving of a high fiber fruit or vegetable, one serving of a Vitamin A rich fruit, and one serving of a Vitamin C rich fruit/vegetable daily.

Vitamins and minerals essential to your health are listed here along with some food suggestions:

**Calcium:** for healthy bones and teeth, function of nerves and glands. Sources: Collards, edamame (green soybeans)

**Fiber:** Soluble fiber is best as it balances cholesterol levels, lowering heart disease risk. Insoluble fiber gives a feeling of fullness while ingesting fewer calories. Sources: Beans, artichokes, pears

**Folic Acid:** Important during pregnancy. Helps form red blood cells. Sources: Dark leafy greens, broccoli

**Iron:** Aids in healthy blood and normal functioning of cells. Sources: Lentils, lima beans, edamame

**Potassium:** regular fluid retention and kidney function. Sources: Potatoes, dark leafy greens, bananas

**Vitamin A:** Eye and skin health, immune system. Sources: Orange fruits and vegetables, dark leafy greens

**Vitamin C:** Helps heal cuts, wounds, teeth and gum health, aids in iron absorption. Sources: citrus fruits, bell peppers, mango

**Choose from the rainbow.** The best way to utilize plant phytonutrients (which are known as antioxidants, immune boosters, and anti inflammatories) – eat a variety of colors of fruits and vegetables. Choose some from all 7 colors to obtain the widest variety.

Dark green: Kale, spinach, broccoli, cabbage, bok choy, mustard and collard greens, brussel sprouts

Yellow/green: corn, green peas, lima beans, avocado, zucchini, green grapes, honeydew melon

Pale green/white: Leeks, green onions, garlic, chives, onions, pears, endive, green apples, celery

Orange/yellow: Pineapple, oranges, tangerines, peaches, nectarines, papaya

Orange: Carrots, mangoes, apricots, cantaloupes, acorn squash, sweet potato

Red: Tomatoes, radishes, red grapefruit, watermelon

Red/Purple: Beets, eggplant, blackberries, raspberries, blueberries, strawberries, cranberries, red apples

### **Cleaning and Storage:**

Rinse fresh produce in cold water, using a vegetable brush if necessary. Discard outer leaves of cabbage and lettuce (reduces pesticide residue, if present). Make sure all cutting implements and boards are clean before you prepare your produce. Believe it or not, more food-borne illness outbreaks have spread from produce than those from beef, poultry, or fish.

**Refrigerator:** Keep these items in perforated plastic bags in the refrigerator's produce drawers, where moisture levels are higher.

Artichokes, asparagus, beans, beets, berries, broccoli, cabbage, carrots, cauliflower, celery, cherries, corn, cucumbers, figs, grapes, green onions, leafy greens, leeks, peas, radishes, summer squashes

**Countertop:** Choose a spot for these that is away from sunlight. Place in a container that allows for air circulation, like a basket or perforated bag.

Apples (after 7 days move to fridge), apricots, avocados\*, bananas, citrus fruits, eggplant, kiwi\*, mangoes, nectarines\*, papayas, peaches\*, pears\*, peppers, pineapple, plums\*, pumpkins, tomatoes, watermelon, winter squashes

\*refrigerate after ripening

**Pantry:** Store onions, potatoes and garlic away from sunlight in a well-ventilated pantry or cupboard.

### **How to save money:**

Buy in season. It's abundant and less expensive. Not only will your produce be cheaper but better quality.

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*"At the moment of commitment, the entire universe conspires to assure your success." - Goethe*

To avoid waste, use items most likely to spoil – berries or delicate greens – within a day or two of purchase. Save sturdier items, like root vegetables, carrots or beets for later in the week. Frozen vegetables can be used anytime to fill in the gaps in your menu.