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Fall Vegetables: Look Out, Here They Come!



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Summer is officially over this week, and although I will miss all the juicy berries, melons and garden tomatoes, fall brings with it an array of colorful, nutrient-packed vegetables from which to make yummy soups, salads, side dishes and juices.

I have already seen pumpkins (pumpkin seeds are one of my favorite snacks toasted or to add to wraps or salads) on display at the local markets.

This is when I bring out my harvest recipes; I am actually excited for the change, considering all the nutritious fall fruits and vegetables that are available.

From September to November, the autumn harvest brings healthy and delicious produce like squash, sweet potatoes, pears, cranberries and crispy apples. All of these offer vitamins and antioxidants that help our bodies heal, stay strong and ward off illness.

Veggies are my daily staples and with the cooler temperatures I enjoy adding the cruciferous family, consisting of cabbage,

rutabaga and cauliflower, but broccoli and salad greens are my absolute must-haves and favorites.

Here is a list to consider on your next trip to the market and please always purchase organic:

Apples: Sweet, crunchy and available year round yet somehow associated with fall. They are packed with antioxidants and flavonoids which are healing to our bodies. Did you know that there are 7,500 different types of apples! Chop them for salads or bake some wonderful pies.

Beets: At their best in the fall, with colors of red, purple, golden, white and even multicolored. Don't toss the greens for they are loaded with nutrients and a compound called betaine, which helps soothe the liver and heart. I juice the greens for an added punch to my morning green drink or toss them in my salad.

Brussels sprouts and cabbage: Consider these two, which offer a great source of vitamins A and C. Brussels sprouts are also high in concentrations of cancer-fighting glucosinolates, which also give them their distinct flavor.

Cranberries: The harvest in October brings out the best in these sweet treats. I like to buy the dried, unsweetened ones to add to salads and side dishes. They are often associated with Thanksgiving but give them a try more often. They help with urinary tract and oral infections.

Pears: I really like the choices here from the European to Asian varieties with Bosc and Bartlett being the most common that I see. Pears are high in soluble fiber, which may help in lowering that "bad cholesterol".

Persimmons: These always fascinated me because they look like a big orange peach with leaves on top. Most are imported from Asia and they should

ripen at room temperature before eating for their fiber, antioxidants, and minerals.

Pomegranates: This sweet fruit, held sacred by some ancient religions, has health benefits, recognized more recently with some popular juices. Studies suggest that their antioxidants may reduce cardiovascular complications and offer prevention of breast and colon cancers.

Pumpkins: They offer one of the best sources of alpha- and beta-carotene, which help with cell growth and the seeds are a great source of alpha-linolenic acid, an omega-3 fatty acid that may help with high blood pressure and colon cleansing.

Rutabagas and turnips: These root vegetables always look odd and bumpy, but they make up for that in fiber and nutrients. As with beets, the greens are a good source of calcium.

Butternut squash: Part of the gourd family with good levels of vitamins A, E and B6. A great fall soup—add some sliced apples or pear for added taste.

Sweet potatoes: Sweet potatoes are rich in beta-carotene and a good source of vitamin C. Always eat the skin for extra nutrients and about four grams of fiber.

With fall fast approaching, don't be afraid try some new fruits and vegetables. You might be surprised at how good they taste while adding new dimension to your meals.

As always, be good to your body, consider what you are eating as good fuel to provide energy, and try some real soul food by helping someone else today by showing love and kindness.

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