

## **Utilizing the Farmer's Market to Purchase Fresh & Seasonal Fall Produce**

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### **Take a Trip to the Farmers' Market**

The farmer's market offers an abundance of fresh and local fruits and vegetables. Sometimes the variety of foods can be overwhelming and deciding which item to select can be difficult. Going to the farmer's market is a fantastic opportunity to try new and different foods. If we shop at a produce stand without having an idea on what crops are available, we will either forget to use the purchase and leave it to rot in the refrigerator or select a food we regularly eat. That is why it is important to understand how to seek ingredients that can be used to create nutritious meal components to enhance meals and snacks. Knowing which foods are available locally during the season will help you decide a food to buy and enjoy.

#### **Fall Fruit:**

##### **Ready-to-eat:**

- Apples
- Grapes
- Pears
- Plums
- Raspberries

##### **Boiled:**

- Apples
- Cranberries
- Pears

Although spring and summer are well-thought to be peak seasons for fruit, autumn still holds its own in having many fruits ready for harvest. Poach apples and pears at 160-180°F (the water will not bubble) for 10-15 minutes or microwave for 1-2 minutes until tender. Top with cinnamon to make a sweet and satisfying dessert. Boil cranberries for 10 minutes to make a cranberry sauce. Cranberry sauce and sliced fruit go well with low-fat yogurt. Autumn fruit is a good source of Vitamin C and fiber.

## **Cruciferous Veggies & Leafy Greens:**

### Ready-to-eat:

- Broccoli
- Cauliflower
- Lettuce
- Spinach

### Steamed, Boiled, or Microwaved:

- Broccoli
- Brussels Sprouts
- Cauliflower
- Collard greens
- Kale
- Swiss Chard
- Spinach

Vegetables are a great side to a meal. Broccoli and cauliflower should be cut into florets before cooking or eating raw. Lettuce and spinach are great choices when making a salad or topping on a sandwich. Slice brussels sprouts in half and cut leafy greens off the bottom stem. When boiling or steaming vegetables, cook for 3-5 minutes. Add 2 tablespoons of water and microwave leafy greens for 3-4 minutes, and broccoli, brussels sprouts, and cauliflower for 4-6 minutes in a plastic-wrapped bowl. Add herbs and spices to amplify flavors if desired. Vegetables can be brushed with olive oil and seasoned and roast at 400°F for around 25 minutes. Cruciferous vegetables are rich in vitamin C, folate (vitamin B9), vitamin A, vitamin K, and fiber. Adequate intake of these nutrients is beneficial for your health.

## **Tubers/Root Vegetables:**

### Boiled or Roasted:

- Beets
- Carrots
- Parsnips
- Potatoes
- Radishes
- Rutabaga
- Sweet potatoes
- Turnips
- Yams

Leave the skin on washed potatoes to retain fiber. Root vegetables can be cooked to give a stew or soup a hearty body or can complement a meal. Small or medium ones can be diced or left whole when boiling or roasting. Roast with olive oil and herbs for 25-40 minutes at 400°F. Boil for 5-15 minutes until easily pierced with a fork, drain the water when cool. Incorporate the leafy greens from beets and turnip roots into a separate side dish. Nutrients in tubers vary, but potassium is commonly found. Carrots and sweet potatoes are rich in vitamin A which help with vision protection.

### **Other pantry staples:**

#### Raw slices:

- Bell Peppers
- Celery

#### Sautéed:

- Bell Peppers
- Celery
- Mushrooms
- Peas
- String beans
- Onions
- Garlic
- Ginger

These culinary essentials can be added to soups, stocks, sauces, rice, salads, and stir-fries. Feel free to ask the vendor for tips on storing or cooking vegetables. Most farmers who grow food have expert advice on each crop.

Keep in mind that fruits and vegetables must be rinsed to remove dirt and harmful bacteria before cooking or eating. Don't be afraid to scrub deep in the leaves of leafy vegetables. Use a paper towel to dry the produce.

### **Inability to Shop at a Farmers' Market**

For some individuals, a challenge is faced when it comes to shopping at a farmers' market. Fortunately, New York State has a program that can help those who need assistance. The Seniors Farmers' Market Nutrition Program offers checks redeemable at farmers' market stands for low-income seniors 60 and older. If you still have coupons, don't forget to use them by Thanksgiving. If you believe you qualify for this program and are a resident of Nassau County,

you can call the Nassau County Office for the Aging next spring to learn more about the program. For those who do not have accessible transportation, there are many Senior Community Service Centers (SCSC) in Nassau County that provide transportation to the local farm stand. Visit our Congregate Meal Programs page on our website to contact your local SCSC to learn more about Nassau County Senior Centers programs and services.

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