

Winter produce

Fruits and vegetables are an important part of a well-balanced, nutrient-dense diet. They provide a variety of vitamins, minerals, antioxidants and fiber for overall good health. During the summer, it's easy to find an abundance of colorful produce, but in the winter, the options are a little more limited. That doesn't mean that you can't get your five servings of fruits and veggies, though. If fresh produce isn't available, frozen fruits and vegetables are a great choice. You can even opt for canned when necessary.

Fresh produce provides the most nutritional punch. But when it comes to the winter months, what's in season? Believe it or not, you'll find more than just fresh butternut squash and sweet potatoes at the farmers' market. Here are some other fruits and vegetables available during the winter:

- Artichokes
- Blood oranges
- Cabbage
- Chestnuts
- Escarole
- Fennel
- Kale
- Parsnips
- Persimmons
- Radishes
- Rhubarb
- Snow peas



Buying seasonal produce at your local farmer's market offers a number of benefits. Not only will you be supporting local farmers, you'll also save money because local, seasonal produce costs less than produce that shipped in from other parts of the U.S., or even from other countries.

Other benefits of eating local foods include:

- Increase flavor because produce is picked at or near the peak of ripeness
- More nutritious foods because recently picked fresh produce has more nutrients than produce that was picked a number of days before you buy it
- Knowing where your food came from
- Supporting the local economy and helping to build your community
- Educating children about the value of purchasing locally and seasonally

Sources: ahealthiermichigan.org, purdue.edu*

*Blue Cross Blue Shield of Michigan and Blue Care Network don't own or control these websites.