

Spring forward with “Peak Harvest” Fruits and Veggies

By Karen Crawford MS, RD, CSP

Spring is finally here and so are a new crop of fresh fruits and veggies. When you choose fruits and veggies that are in season, you are purchasing produce that is fresher, better tasting and healthier for you. Not to mention, at a better price! Strawberries in April, May and June are much redder in color and much sweeter than fresh strawberries in January. This is because spring is peak harvest time for strawberries. Depending on your region of the country, you may have access to seasonal produce at different times of the year. In addition, when you are able to get locally grown produce, meaning food that has less distance to travel to reach your local markets, it is even more crisp, flavorful and filled with great nutrients. When fresh produce has to be shipped across the county and held in several storage centers along the way, the produce has to be picked before it is fully ripe and then typically treated with chemicals to slow the ripening process. Some nutritional integrity and quality of the produce may be lost in the process, lessening your enjoyment and reducing its nutritional benefits.

The table below list several fruits and veggies that are ripe for the picking this spring. Also listed are the top nutrients found in these foods and an idea or two as to how to enjoy them. So, next time you are in your local market, look for these fruits and veggies that are in season now. Enjoy!

**The nutrients listed below are based on 1 cup servings. Percentages are for the Daily Value (DV).*

| Fruits & Veggies | Top Nutrients | Ways to Enjoy |
|------------------|--|--|
| Beets | Iron- 16% | Canned & drained as a salad topper |
| Carrots | Vitamin A- 77% | Dipped in light ranch dressing |
| Collards | Vitamin A- 308% Vitamin C- 58% Calcium- 27% Iron- 12% | Slowly cooked & seasoned with a turkey leg instead of pork |
| English Peas | Vitamin A-18% Vitamin C- 14% | Simply steamed |
| Radishes | Vitamin C- 29% | Sliced for salads |
| Spinach | Vitamin A- 59% | As salad or sautéed with garlic, lemon & olive oil |
| Yellow Squash | Vitamin C- 32% | With salsa instead of tortilla chips |
| Zucchini | Vitamin A-40% | Steamed or cooked in a marinara sauce for added veggie content |
| Strawberries | Vitamin C- 149% | Just as they are! |
| Turnip Greens | Vitamin A- 220% Vitamin C- 66% Calcium- 20% Iron- 6% | Slowly cooked in Low Sodium Chicken Stock |