

Spinach



Selection and Storage

- Choose spinach with fresh, crisp leaves. Remove any wilted or yellow leaves.
- Wash spinach and store with a damp paper towel in a plastic bag in the refrigerator. Use within 3 - 5 days.
- Spinach is "in season" from May to June and October to mid-November.

Preparation Tips

- Use instead of lettuce in sandwiches and wraps.
- Add fresh or frozen spinach to soup for color, flavor and nutrition.
- Serve in salads. For extra nutrition and flavor, add strawberries, mandarin oranges, dried cranberries or chopped apples.
- Add fresh spinach for an extra layer in lasagne or use frozen spinach, but squeeze out the extra water first.

Kid Friendly Ideas

- Spinach is a great addition to salad. Kids can help by washing the spinach and tearing it into bite-size pieces.
- Kids love to dip fresh spinach leaves into low-fat dressing.
- Have "Make your own pizza" night and use fresh spinach on the pizza.

Broccoli



Selection and Storage

- Broccoli is "in season" in the spring and fall. Look for lower prices at the grocery store and farmers' markets during this time of the year.
- Choose bunches that are dark green.
- Store in the refrigerator unwashed in an open plastic bag.
- Store in the refrigerator for up to 5 days.

Preparation Tips

- For a bright green color, cook broccoli in a small amount of water in a covered pot. After a few minutes remove the cover to let the steam out. Cover the pot again and cook until crisp, but tender.
- Broccoli is great in stir fries. Excellent on baked potatoes, too!
- Add broccoli to salads, soups, stews, and casseroles.

Kid Friendly Ideas

- Raw broccoli served with low-fat dip or hummus makes a great snack for kids.
- Make up a batch of low-fat cheese sauce to pour over cooked broccoli. Broccoli and cheese is great on baked potatoes, too!

Chard



chard

Selection and Storage

- Check your local farmers' market for chard in spring and fall. The flavor of chard is best when it is fresh and the leaves are tender.
- Store leaves unwashed in the refrigerator in plastic bags for 2 - 3 days.
- Wash before preparing.

Preparation Tips

- Chard can be steamed, roasted, or sautéed.
- Can be used instead of spinach in recipes.
- Remove the stems and cook the leaves in a small amount of olive oil with onions and garlic.
- Add to soup for color, flavor and nutrition. Chard is especially good in bean soup.
- Use steamed chard leaves instead of cabbage leaves in your favorite stuffed cabbage roll recipe.

Kid Friendly Ideas

- Kids can help prepare chard by removing the thick stem from the leaves.
- Add to tossed salads for extra flavor. Young children can help combine and stir salad ingredients.
- Kids love to grow rainbow chard. It is easy to grow in the spring or fall.

Peas



Selection and Storage

- Fresh peas are a spring veggie. Look for peas at local grocery stores and farmers' markets in June and early July. You can buy frozen peas all year long.
- Store fresh peas in the refrigerator and use within 3 - 5 days.
- To shell peas, pinch the stem off and pull the string down the length of the pod. The pod will pop open and the peas can be pushed out.

Preparation Tips

- Add frozen or fresh peas to green salads. Peas are also good in tuna and chicken salad.
- Add peas to macaroni and cheese for added flavor and color.
- Frozen peas only need to be thawed before adding to pasta salad.

Kid Friendly Ideas

- Kids will often eat thawed frozen peas for a snack.
- When added to favorite dishes, kids will often eat peas. Add peas to pasta dishes, mac and cheese and rice dishes.

Strawberries

strawberries



Selection and Storage

- Strawberry "season" in Maryland is May and June.
- Choose bright red, firm strawberries.
- Store unwashed in the refrigerator for up to 3 days.
- Can be "quick frozen" on a cookie sheet then stored in freezer bags.

Preparation Tips

- Eat whole as a snack.
- Add to fruit salads and cereal.
- Use as a topping for low-fat ice cream, pancakes or waffles.
- For a quick breakfast, whip up a healthy smoothie by putting yogurt, strawberries, and milk in a blender.

Kid Friendly Ideas

- Most kids love strawberries. Take them to a "pick your own" farm to experience picking (and sampling) their own strawberries.

- Kids can help with preparing strawberries by gently washing them and removing the stems.

Summer Squash



Selection and Storage

- Squash is "in season" in July and August. Look for low prices and fresh squash at your local farmers' market and grocery store.
- Wash squash and serve a few days after purchase for best flavor.
- Select small to medium-size squash that are shiny with no soft spots or wrinkled skin.

Preparation Tips

- Wash, slice and stir fry until just tender. Add tomatoes and Italian seasonings. Serve as a vegetable or add chicken or beef for a main dish.
- Shred squash and add to meatloaf, meatballs, burgers, muffins and breads.
- Use squash slices in salad in place of cucumber.

Kid Friendly Ideas

- For a healthy snack, cut thin slices and serve with low-fat ranch dressing. Kids love the crunch when they bite.
- Kids like to watch squash grow in the garden. Even young children can pick them and help with simple preparation.

Melons



Selection and Storage

- There are many types of melons - cantaloupe, honeydew, and watermelon.
- Cut melon should be stored in the refrigerator and covered with plastic wrap or in a storage container with a lid.
- Store whole melons in the refrigerator if they will fit. Otherwise, store in a cool area.
- Use melons within a few days of purchase.

Preparation Tips

- Wash outside of melon with cold water before slicing.
- For a fruit kabob, put melon and other fresh fruit on skewers. Serve with fruit yogurt for dipping.
- Mix with other fruit for a colorful fruit salad.
- Serve as a dessert with some frozen yogurt or low-fat ice cream.

Kid Friendly Ideas

- Kids love to scoop melon into balls with a melon baller. Use in fruit salad or for an easy snack any time of day.
- Melons are great plain, sliced on cereal or mixed with yogurt.

Peppers



Selection and Storage

- Low in cost from early August to mid-September. Buy extra, remove seeds and chop. Freeze in baggies for adding to casseroles, skillet meals and soup.
- Store in a plastic bag in the refrigerator for up to 5 days.
- Choose peppers with firm skin and stems. Take out the seeds before cooking.

Preparation Tips

- Cook on the grill for great flavor.
- Cut in half and remove seeds. Fill with a mixture of rice, tomato soup, and lean ground beef. Top with cheese and bake at 350 degrees for 1 hour.
- Add to salads, pasta, and Chinese or Mexican dishes.
- Serve pepper rings with a sandwich.

Kid Friendly Ideas

- Save the seeds from a green pepper plant. Plant the seeds in a container and have the kids watch them grow.
- Kids love taste tests. Try one with different colored peppers to see which ones they like best. Kids enjoy dipping pepper strips into low-fat dressing.

Tomatoes



tomatoes

Selection and Storage

- Tomatoes are "in season" in MD from late May to early November. Look for low prices and fresh tomatoes at your local farmers' market.

- Store at room temperature away from direct sunlight. When ripe, eat within one week.

Preparation Tips

- Serve with an egg on whole grain toast for breakfast.
- Toss cherry tomatoes with olive oil, salt, and pepper. Roast in the oven at 425 degrees for 10 minutes. Serve over pasta or as a pizza topping.
- Add chopped tomatoes to vegetables and serve over pasta or rice.
- Use canned low-salt tomatoes as a base for vegetable soup.
- Chopped tomatoes can be frozen for use in sauces or other cooked dishes.

Kid Friendly Ideas

- Add sliced tomatoes to grilled cheese sandwiches.

- Kids love making salsa. Chop tomatoes and onions, mix with black beans and corn to make a great salsa.

- Kids love grape tomatoes!

Winter Squash



winter squash

Selection and Storage

- Winter squash includes butternut, spaghetti, acorn and hubbard squash, as well as pumpkins.
- Winter squash is "in season" in stores and farmers' markets in August, September and the beginning of October.
- Store in a cool, dark place. Use within 3 - 5 weeks.

Preparation Tips

- Cut acorn squash in half. Remove seeds and bake in the oven or microwave until tender. Fill the "bowl" with a small amount of butter, brown sugar, salt, and pepper.
- You can steam, sauté, grill or bake squash.
- Winter squash makes a wonderful addition to soup.

Kid Friendly Ideas

- Mashed hubbard or butternut squash is great. Cut squash in half and remove seeds. Microwave until soft. Scoop out the squash, mash until smooth, and season with butter, salt and pepper.
- Make "spaghetti". Cut spaghetti squash in half and cook in the microwave until it is fork-tender. Scrape the "spaghetti" out with a fork and top with a small amount of margarine and sprinkle with cinnamon.

Cabbage



Selection and Storage

- Look for good prices on cabbage from June to September in local grocery stores and farmers' markets.
- Choose cabbage heads with tight leaves.
- Store in the refrigerator for up to 7 days.

Preparation Tips

- Chop and add to pasta, soup or stew.
- Great in salads or as coleslaw.
- Wash and cut into quarters. Cook in a crock pot with potatoes and a ham slice.
- Can be steamed, boiled, microwaved or stir fried.
- For homemade coleslaw, stir together a bag of shredded cabbage, $\frac{2}{3}$ cup low-fat mayo, 2 tablespoons each of vegetable oil and vinegar, and a sprinkle of sugar and salt to taste.

Kid Friendly Ideas

- Always have kids wash their hands before helping in the kitchen
- Shred and use as a taco topping instead of lettuce.
- Add shredded cabbage to diced pears and apples and serve with low-fat yogurt.

Potatoes



Selection and Storage

- Available year round in the grocery store. Potatoes are inexpensive, too.
- Select firm and fairly smooth potatoes.
- Avoid potatoes that have sprouted or have wrinkled skin, cut surfaces, or green or dark areas.
- Store in a cool, dark place for up to 3-5 weeks.

Preparation Tips

- Potatoes can be added to soups, stews or casseroles.
- Cut white or sweet potatoes into bite-size pieces. Toss with a small amount of olive oil, salt and pepper. Spread on a cookie sheet and bake until brown and crisp at 375 degrees.
- Easy to bake in the oven or microwave. Pierce potatoes with a fork before cooking.

Kid Friendly Ideas

- Kids can scrub whole potatoes to help with the cooking.
- Kids love to put toppings on their baked potatoes. Try broccoli, grated cheese, chili, or low-fat sour cream.