



Shop the Farmers' Markets

Now is the time that Farmers' Markets are opening across the state.

Buying produce from local growers is a good way for you to support the local economy and to eat healthier. Soon local strawberries, asparagus, fresh spinach and other greens, and some other early foods will show up.

Strawberries are a good source of vitamin C and potassium and can add color to your dishes. They taste sweet and add some crunch to your foods. A dish of plain strawberries is good. Another way to serve strawberries is to put a serving in a bowl and top them with low-fat, sugar-free vanilla yogurt. That way you will also get some of the calcium you need, too.

Buy strawberries that are firm and shiny with a healthy color. Strawberries that are dark or dull are usually overripe. Strawberries bruise very easily. One bad strawberry can affect the whole container!

Wash the strawberries before removing the hull and just before you will be using them. Rinse them under cold water – do not soak strawberries!

Spinach will also be one of the early arrivals at the local market. Spinach is an excellent source of folic acid, vitamin A, potassium, and magnesium. It is a good source of Vitamin C and iron. Fresh spinach makes a delicious fresh salad.

Most of the spinach in our supermarkets is prewashed. This is due to the fact that spinach grows best in sandy soil that clings to the plant. Thoroughly wash spinach just before using it. Wash it by immersing the leaves in a large bowl of water and shaking the leaves gently. Do not soak spinach.

Make a main-dish salad with lots of mixed vegetables with the fresh spinach and try some of the newer low-fat dressings. Add cooked chicken, ham, or other protein source for a complete meal.

As the summer progresses, more fruits and vegetables will be available. One key to make sure to get the most nutrients from your fresh fruits and vegetables is to limit the amount of time you keep them in storage. First-quality fruits and vegetables can deteriorate in the refrigerator, losing vitamins and nutrients.

Plan to buy only what you will use in a few days. That goes for all produce. Research shows that the longer a food is stored, the greater the nutrient loss. Fragile produce like berries, tomatoes, peppers, etc. should be stored for only two or three days. Bagged greens deteriorate quickly after opening – use them up in a day or two.



Check Your Fruit and Vegetable Knowledge

- T F Eating fruits and vegetables every day can help you fight off disease.
- T F Green vegetables are the most nutritious.
- T F Preparing fruits and vegetables at home always takes too much time.
- T F Most people do not eat enough fruits and vegetables for good health.

Answers: 1. True – fruits and vegetables are a good source of many vitamins and minerals that help keep us healthy. Research shows that people who eat a diet that contains generous amounts of fruits and vegetables are likely to have a reduced risk of chronic diseases.

2. False – no one food contains all the nutrients your body needs. To have a healthy diet eat fruits and vegetables of many different colors to get a wide range of nutrients.

3. False – many fruits and vegetables need only a quick washing before you eat them. Look for recipes that take only minutes to prepare.

4. True – even though we talk about needing to eat more fruit and vegetables, most Americans don't get enough. If you want to check how well you are doing go to



Spinach Strawberry Salad

- 1 cup fresh spinach, washed and torn
- 1/2 cup fresh strawberries, sliced
- 1 tablespoon walnut pieces

Wash and trim spinach. Place in a salad bowl. Spread sliced strawberries over spinach. Sprinkle walnuts over the top.

- 2 teaspoons honey
- 1/2 teaspoon sesame seeds
- 1/4 teaspoon poppy seeds
- 1/4 teaspoon minced onion
- Dash Worcestershire sauce
- Sprinkle of paprika
- 2 teaspoons vegetable oil
- 2 teaspoons cider vinegar

Mix honey, sesame, poppy, minced onion, Worcestershire sauce, and paprika in a blender. Blend until frothy. With blender running, add oil and vinegar. Makes 1 serving.

Nutrition information per serving : 150 calories, 10 grams fat, 1 gram saturated fat, 0 mg cholesterol, 4 grams carbohydrates, 30 mg sodium.

NOTE: to make this a main dish salad, put 1 grilled, diced chicken breast on top of the salad before adding dressing. Mandarin oranges may be substituted for the strawberries.

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