

Fall Harvest: Cooking and Eating with the Seasons

Fall is here and with the changing of the leaves and breaking out the flannel jackets comes seasonal flavors. Pumpkin spice lattes aren't the only way to incorporate autumn into your day. There are plenty of other fall foods to try this season. Eating with the seasons can sound intimidating but there is a variety of produce no matter the time of year. Trying new seasonal recipes can be a fun way to mix things up and try new recipes.

What does it mean to eat foods that are in season?

Different foods are harvested at different times of the year. With modern agriculture you can typically find a variety of foods year round but you may notice that if you choose to eat a food when it is in season it tastes a lot fresher and more flavorful. Seasonal foods may be different depending on your geographical location so it can be helpful to research which fruits and vegetables are grown locally near you. Eating seasonally can also mean eating produce from local farmers.

Why eat foods that are local and in season?

Besides being more delicious and fresh, seasonal produce is also more nutritious. The shorter the amount of time between when the fruit is picked and when it is eaten, the more nutrients it retains. Because the food has not been packed and shipped across the country, it also creates less waste and pollution. It helps support the local economy and small business as well. Lastly, a benefit of eating locally grown produce is that it is safer because there is less chance of contamination. When the food comes from a far location it is at more risk for safety issues in the process. Buying locally also creates the opportunity to ask the farmer more about how the food is grown and harvested. You may find your body naturally craves seasonal foods as the weather changes. Maybe you notice you crave strawberries in summer and apple pie in fall. If not, it can still be fun to experiment trying new recipes with fresh ingredients.

Produce in season now in Illinois:

- Apples
- Arugula
- Beets
- Blackberries, blueberries, and raspberries
- Broccoli
- Brussels sprouts
- Cantaloupe and melons
- Carrots
- Celery
- Corn
- Cucumber
- Eggplant
- Kale
- Mushrooms
- Peppers

- Pumpkin
- Sweet potatoes
- Tomatoes
- Winter and summer squash and zucchini
- And many more

As you can see, eating foods that are in season does not have to be limiting. It is still possible to get plenty of variety while eating seasonal, local produce. Check what is in season by state and month on <https://www.seasonalfoodguide.org/> or similar websites.

Ways to incorporate autumn produce into your day:

Breakfast ideas:

- Pumpkin pie oatmeal
- Sweet potato hash browns and egg skillet
- Apple dutch baby
- Blueberry pancakes
- Toasted berry granola
- Apple breakfast sausage

Lunch and dinner ideas:

- Pumpkin chili
- Carrot ginger soup
- Cream of mushroom soup
- Broccoli cheddar soup
- Kale and quinoa salad
- Cauliflower steaks
- Zucchini Fritters
- Eggplant parmesan
- Chicken and mushroom carbonara
- Roasted beets with citrus dressing

Snack ideas:

- Apple chips
- Apple butter toast
- Kale chips
- Applesauce cake with berries
- Pumpkin granola parfait with berries
- Ants on a log (celery with peanut butter and raisins)
- Sweet potato fries
- Caramel apples

There are also plenty of other foods that can get you in the fall mood that aren't as perishable as produce. Often with fall comes cooler weather and we start craving warmer, heartier foods. This is where apple cider, candy corn, and roasted nuts may find their way into your pantry. There are no right or wrong choices when it comes to food. By listening to your body and honoring your cravings you will feel more satisfied and naturally provide your body with the nutrition it needs. The best way to find foods you enjoy is through having an open-mind and being willing to experiment. There are countless ways to prepare the produce listed above, so don't blacklist any fruit or vegetables until you have tried them a few different ways. Maybe you don't like steamed broccoli but you love broccoli cheddar soup. Or maybe you don't like celery as a snack, but you love the crunch it adds to tuna salad.

If you're looking to explore your relationship with food and your body, Mind Body Co-op has a team of integrative nutritionists and dietitians ready to partner with you on your journey. Reach out to info@mindbodycoopchicago.com and learn more about our nutritionists [Grace](#), and [Madeline](#).