

Autumn Produce

September through November



Nutrition experts agree that most Americans would be healthier if they ate more fruits and vegetables. As summer fades into fall, cool-season crops once again are in season. You can find fresh fruits and vegetables at farmers markets, roadside stands, and groceries across Indiana. Use the following tips to select, prepare, and store this delicious produce.

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Vegetables available in autumn in Indiana

Basil and fresh herbs	Beets	Broccoli	Brussels sprouts
Cabbage	Carrots	Cauliflower	Collards
Green beans	Lettuce	Lima beans	Mushrooms
Onions (dry)	Potatoes	Pumpkins	Radishes
Spinach	Sweet potatoes	Turnips	Winter squash

Pumpkins and winter squash

Select

Select pumpkins that are mature, firm, and rich orange. To test for maturity, press your thumbnail against the skin. Mature pumpkins have a tough skin that can't be punctured easily with your fingernail. Avoid cracked, decayed, or badly scarred pumpkins. Choose winter squash that are firm, heavy for their size, and have dull, not glossy, rinds. The rinds



should be hard. Avoid winter squash with signs of decay, as this may indicate moldiness.

Prepare

Pumpkins can be prepared in many ways. To roast in the oven, cut pumpkin in half, scoop out the seeds and strings, and bake at 325° with cut side down until pumpkin skin pierces



easily, (an hour or two). Once pumpkin is cool, scoop out flesh from skin. Discard skin. Mash or puree pumpkin flesh to use for your favorite recipes. The seeds can be roasted on a shallow baking sheet at 250° for 10-15 minutes. Salt if desired.

Winter squash can also be prepared in a variety of ways. To roast, pierce the squash near the stem with a knife to allow steam to escape. Bake in the oven at 350° for 45 minutes to one hour, until a knife can be easily inserted near the stem. Cut out a small circle around the stem, remove this piece from the squash, and scoop out the seeds and fibrous material in the cavity.

Store

Store whole, mature pumpkins in a dry, airy place with 60 percent to 70 percent humidity for up to several months. Handle pumpkins carefully to avoid surface damage, which will lead to decay. Pumpkins showing any kind of spoilage should be thrown away. Winter squash has a much longer storage life than summer squash. Depending upon the variety, it can be kept from one week to six months. The ideal temperature for storing winter squash is 50-60°F (about 10-15°C).



Fruits available in autumn in Indiana

Apples	Cantaloupes	Grapes
Pears	Raspberries	Watermelons

Apples and watermelon

Select

Select apples that are bruise-free and firm to the touch.

Look for watermelons that are evenly shaped with no bruises, cracks, or soft spots. Watermelons that

are heavy for their size tend to be juicier. It is difficult to know when to pick a watermelon, but a firm, yellowish underside is a reliable indicator of ripeness.

Prepare

Apples should be washed thoroughly under running

water, then directly eaten or sliced. If apples are sliced, dipping the slices in a vitamin C-fortified apple juice will help prevent them from browning. Watermelon should be washed well in the sink under running water or with a wet cloth before cutting. Once washed, watermelon can be cut any way desired, such as cubes or slices.



Store

Apples should be stored in the refrigerator to slow ripening and maintain flavor. They should be stored away from foods with strong odors to prevent them from absorbing these odors.

Watermelon can be kept in the refrigerator for up to one week, but it is best eaten fresh since the flesh deteriorates rapidly.

Recipes

Try these delicious and healthy recipes with your autumn produce.

Pumpkin Seed Snack

Ingredients:

- 1 cup roasted pumpkin seeds
- ½ cup walnuts, chopped
- ½ cup coconut
- ½ cup raisins
- ½ teaspoon salt

Directions:

Mix all ingredients together and serve for a great snack.

Butternut Squash with Herbs

Ingredients:

- 1-pound butternut squash
- 1 teaspoon olive oil
- 1 cup onion, thinly sliced
- 3 large mushrooms, sliced
- $\frac{1}{4}$ cup low-sodium chicken stock
- $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon fresh tarragon, chopped
- 1 Tablespoon fresh parsley, chopped
- $1\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoons fresh chives, snipped

Directions:

1. Peel the squash, remove the seeds, and cut into $\frac{3}{4}$ -inch cubes. (To make peeling easier, prick the squash with a fork and microwave on high for five to ten minutes.)
2. Heat the oil in a large non-stick fry pan on medium-low heat, add onions and mushrooms. Sauté for about five minutes until onions soften.
3. Add squash and chicken stock. Cover tightly and cook until squash is tender (about 20 minutes).
4. Remove the cover and cook a minute or two longer to evaporate most of the remaining liquid.
5. Sprinkle on the parsley, chives, and tarragon and serve.

Apple Crisp

Ingredients:

- 4 cups apples, peeled and sliced
- $\frac{1}{4}$ cup water
- $\frac{3}{4}$ cup flour
- $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon salt
- 1 cup sugar
- $\frac{1}{3}$ cup butter
- 1 teaspoon cinnamon

Directions:

1. Place apples in a shallow baking dish and sprinkle with water.
2. Work together flour, salt, sugar, butter, and cinnamon with your hands until crumbly.
3. Spread crumb mixture over apples.
4. Bake uncovered in oven at 350° for 40 minutes.
5. Serve warm with whipped cream or low-fat ice cream.

Watermelon Banana Split

Ingredients:

- 2 bananas
- 1 medium watermelon
- 1 cup fresh blueberries
- 1 cup fresh pineapple, diced
- 1 cup fresh strawberries, sliced
- $\frac{1}{4}$ cup caramel fruit dip
- $\frac{1}{4}$ cup honey roasted almonds

Directions:

1. Peel bananas and cut in half lengthwise, then cut each piece in half.
2. For each serving, lay two banana pieces against sides of shallow dish.
3. Using an ice cream scooper, scoop three watermelon scoops from the watermelon and place in between bananas in each dish.
4. Top each watermelon scoop with a different fruit topping.
5. Drizzle caramel all over fruit.
6. Sprinkle with almonds and serve.



For more Information . . .

. . . on safe refrigerator storage, visit:

- www.extension.purdue.edu/extmedia/CFS/CFS-424-W.pdf

. . . about farmers markets, visit:

- Purdue Extension: www.extension.purdue.edu/anr/anr/anr/farmersmkts.html
or 1-888-EXT-INFO
- Indiana State Department of Agriculture: www.in.gov/isda/market
or (317) 232-8770
- United States Department of Agriculture: www.ams.usda.gov/farmersmarkets

Other publications in this series

- CFS-754-W, *Spring Produce*
www.extension.purdue.edu/extmedia/CFS/CFS-754-W.pdf
- CFS-755-W, *Summer Produce*
www.extension.purdue.edu/extmedia/CFS/CFS-755-W.pdf

Sources

- Produce for Better Health Foundation: www.fruitsandveggiesmorematters.org/
- Rainier Fruit Co.: www.rainierfruit.com/consumers/index.html
- National Watermelon Promotion Board: www.watermelon.org/kids_recipes.asp
- The George Mateljan Foundation: www.whfoods.com/genpage.php?tname=foodspice&dbid=63#purchasequalities
- Cooks.com: www.cooks.com/rec/view/0,1950,128186-244196,00.html

Five reasons to eat more fruits and vegetables

1. They are naturally low in calories.
2. They are high in vitamins and minerals, which help you to feel energized.
3. They provide fiber to help keep you full.
4. They are healthy whether they are fresh, canned, dried, frozen, or in 100% juice.
5. They taste great!

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