

Title:

A Colorful Plate Year-Round

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391

Summary:

For overall health, eating a variety of fruits and vegetables is essential year-round. A good starting place in your quest for color can be the freezer case.

Keywords:

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Article Body:

Our family is in the habit of going to a local farmers' market during the summer and fall to get farm-fresh fruits and vegetables. I admit that I have to work a bit harder during the off- season, when seasonal produce is less plentiful, to make sure that my plate is just as colorful. For overall health, eating a variety of fruits and vegetables is essential year-round.

A good starting place in your quest for color is the freezer case. Frozen melon cubes, berries, peach slices and even pineapple chunks are available year-round. Frozen spinach is one of my favorites for convenience-it is washed, cut and ready to be tossed into a soup or pasta dish. From a nutritional standpoint, it has just as much vitamin A and fiber as fresh-cooked spinach.

Next, stop in the canned fruit and vegetable aisle. "Our studies show that the nutrition value of canned fruits and vegetables is comparable to fresh and frozen varieties," notes Barbara Klein, Ph.D., professor of Food Science and Nutrition at the University of Illinois at Urbana. Dr. Klein points out that the canning process does not affect the amount of fiber in fruits and vegetables. Canned pumpkin, apricots, carrots and other orange fruits and vegetables are a rich source of vitamin A. "In fact, vitamin A levels in canned pumpkin are much higher than in fresh cooked because canned pumpkin is less watery and more concentrated," says Dr. Klein.

Finally, visit the cereal aisle. New technology for freeze-drying fruit enables cereal makers to add berries and other types of fruit to their products. A bowl of Total® with Strawberries is a great way to brighten up breakfast. Top with sliced banana, slivers of dried apricots or a medley of dried berries. Dried

fruit is a concentrated form of fresh and retains healthy nutrients like fiber and potassium.

Here are a few simple ways to add color to your plate:

- &#8226; Toss sliced radicchio, red onion and yellow peppers into a green salad.
- &#8226; Sauté frozen spinach together with minced onion; top with pine nuts, golden raisins and a dash of balsamic vinegar.
- &#8226; Simmer slices of yellow and red apples and pears with a dash of apple cider and maple syrup until soft. Top with crushed Whole Grain Total® for added flavor and crunch.
- &#8226; Add frozen mixed vegetables to your favorite soup.