

## Title:

Seasonal Produce: You Can't Beat the Flavor or the Price

## Word Count:

536

## Summary:

There are four great arguments for buying and cooking vegetables and fruits that are grown locally: diversity, flavor, price, and nutrition.

## Keywords:

produce, fruit vegetables, cooking vegetables, fresh produce, fresh fruit and vegetables, nutrition

## Article Body:

When it comes to selecting fresh produce, it's all too easy to get into a rut. With the globalization of agriculture, seasonal fruit and vegetables are a thing of the past. Fresh produce can be flown into our local supermarkets from around the world, and we are no longer exposed to the seasonal limitations imposed by Mother Nature. Strawberries in January? No problem! Oranges in July? Ditto!

Those who advocate buying and eating only locally grown fresh fruit and vegetables often speak from a position of reducing carbon emissions from planes, trains, and trucks used to transport produce around the world. Others buy locally because they want to reduce our dependence on big agribusiness and instead support small farms near where they live. While both viewpoints are valid, there are four other great arguments for buying and cooking vegetables and fruits that are grown locally: diversity, flavor, price, and nutrition.

## Diversity

When produce is available year-round, we tend not to experiment with seasonal fresh fruit and vegetables. If zucchini is always front and center, we can easily overlook the pattypan and yellow crookneck summer squashes, or the dense butternut and acorn squashes of the winter. Similarly, why try persimmons, kiwifruit, or quince if seedless grapes are easy to buy and always available? Eating seasonal produce not only creates an awareness of the shifting seasons, but also challenges us to expand our culinary horizons and try new techniques for cooking vegetables.

## Flavor

Although many of us grew up and live far from agricultural areas, anyone who has ever plucked an apricot from a tree and tasted the warmth of the sun along with the sweet juiciness of the fruit knows that seasonal produce has exponentially more flavor than fruit and vegetables that are flown in and stored in produce warehouses. There is much chest thumping and lamenting about how Americans don't eat enough fresh fruit and vegetables, but few acknowledge that flavor is all too often sacrificed for the sake of appearance. In many instances, strains are cultivated for their ability to withstand transport and for a uniform appearance; in other cases, transport times dictate that fruits have to be plucked when they're green, preventing them from developing the full-bodied flavor that nature intended. Just think - when was the last time you enjoyed the tender juiciness of a vine-ripened tomato or the succulence of a ripe pineapple just off the plant?

### Price

When compared with pre-packaged foods and snacks, fresh fruit and vegetables are always a bargain. Nonetheless, seasonal produce is even less expensive than that which is flown in from halfway around the world. Patronize a local farmer's market, and you not only get produce bursting with flavor, but you can also buy it at a fraction of the cost of your local supermarket.

### Nutrition

Science is beginning to substantiate what local food aficionados have long felt: plant-ripened produce has more nutrients than produce that is picked before it's ripe and transported. Fresh fruits and vegetables are already jam-packed with nutrition, but why not get an extra kick by eating seasonally and locally?

The rationale for eating seasonal and locally grown produce is varied, but whichever way you look at it, fresh produce can't be beat.