



FALL VEGETABLE GUIDE

HOW TO SELECT THE BEST VEGETABLES THIS FALL SEASON

In every season, it's important to eat a variety of colorful fruits and vegetables – especially those that are dark green, red, and orange. Four vegetables in season during the fall—broccoli, chard, mushrooms and potatoes—are delicious in dishes from soups and stews to casseroles, side dishes and more. See what these four vegetables have to offer nutritionally, and how to pick the best at the market.

Broccoli

This green powerhouse is one of America's favorite everyday vegetables: affordable, readily available and densely packed with essential nutrients. Broccoli is a great choice in any form, but raw broccoli offers the most health benefits, so consider adding it to your salads—and remember that its stem is edible too.

What You Get: Broccoli is a good source of fiber and an excellent source of vitamins C, K, A and folate. It's also rich in compounds called isothiocyanates that rev up the body's natural detoxifying enzymes.

Shopping Tip: A head of broccoli is composed of a large stalk branching out into several smaller stalks, containing hundreds of florets. Large supermarkets usually sell full heads of broccoli, broccoli crowns (which have most of the stem removed) and florets. Look for sturdy, dark green spears with tight buds and no yellowing.

Storage Tip: Broccoli will stay fresh in the refrigerator for at least a week. If the florets start to look dry, wrap the head in damp paper towels.

Chard

Earthy and sweet, chard has more substance than spinach. It's easy to find and its colorful incarnations can be used interchangeably (though green chard tends to be mildest).

What You Get: A 1-cup serving of cooked chard is an excellent source of vitamin K, a nutrient important for bone health, and vitamin A, which plays a role in healthy immunity.

Shopping Tip: Rainbow chard, white or green chard and ruby or red chard are the most common varieties available. Look for fresh, crisp, brightly colored greens; avoid those that are wilted or blemished.

Storage Tip: Wrap the stem ends in damp paper towels and refrigerate in a plastic bag for up to a week, depending on the freshness of the chard when it was purchased.

Mushrooms

These days, the produce aisle routinely offers white button mushrooms, portobellos (also spelled “portobella”), their younger sibling cremini (also sold as “baby bellas”), oyster and shiitake mushrooms.

What You Get: All mushrooms contain nutrients such as potassium, copper, niacin and selenium. Research suggests that white button mushrooms seem to have as many antioxidant properties as (and in some cases more than) other mushrooms.

Shopping Tip: Fresh mushrooms should be firm, with a fresh, smooth appearance.

Storage Tips: Keep mushrooms in their original container for up to a week in the refrigerator. Once opened, mushrooms should be stored in a porous paper bag to prolong their shelf life. Do not store fresh mushrooms in airtight containers, which will cause condensation and speed up spoilage. Never freeze fresh mushrooms.

Potatoes

Endlessly versatile, potatoes come in all sizes and textures. Stuff baked russets with vegetables and cheese for an easy crowd-pleasing supper or mash them with nonfat milk and garlic for a simple side. Turn boiled red-skinned potatoes into a creamy potato salad. Small, long, flavorful potatoes called fingerlings make an elegant side when simply steamed and tossed with fresh herbs.

What You Get: High in carbohydrates, the potato often gets a bad rap. However, potatoes are excellent sources of vitamin C and potassium, and offer fiber—especially when eaten with the skin on—and so have a place in a healthful eating plan.

Shopping Tips: Look for firm potatoes that are free of soft spots. Avoid potatoes that have begun to sprout—they have been stored too long. Potatoes are classified by the texture of their flesh:

Waxy potatoes, such as red skins and fingerlings, have moist, dense flesh and keep their shape when cooked, so choose them for salads and soups.

Floury potatoes (also called baking potatoes), such as russets, have drier, starchier flesh, perfect for baking and mashing. All-purpose potatoes, such as white and Yukon Gold potatoes, are in between waxy and floury potatoes, so they function well in most applications.

Storage Tips: Potatoes should never be refrigerated. Store them in a cool, dark place with good air circulation, to discourage softening, sprouting and spoiling. If potatoes begin to sprout during storage but are still firm, remove the sprouts and any eyes that are beginning to sprout before eating. Potatoes turn green when exposed to light—peel and discard the green skin before eating. Properly stored, potatoes will keep 10 to 12 weeks. Small, thin-skinned potatoes and new potatoes should be used within a few days.

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