

Spinach



Selection and Storage

- Choose spinach with fresh, crisp leaves. Remove any wilted or yellow leaves.
- Wash spinach and store with a damp paper towel in a plastic bag in the refrigerator. Use within 3 - 5 days.
- Spinach is in season from May to June and October to mid-November.

Preparation Tips

- Use instead of lettuce in sandwiches and wraps.
- Add fresh or frozen spinach to soup for color, flavor and nutrition.
- Serve in salads. For extra nutrition and flavor, add strawberries, mandarin oranges, dried cranberries or chopped apples.
- Add fresh spinach for an extra layer in lasagne or use frozen spinach, but squeeze out the extra water first.

Fresh Ideas

- Spinach is a great addition to salad. Kids can help by washing the spinach and tearing it into bite-size pieces.
- Try dipping fresh spinach leaves into low-fat dressing.
- Have "Make your own pizza" night and use fresh spinach on the pizza.

Broccoli



broccoli

Selection and Storage

- Broccoli is in season in the spring and fall. Look for lower prices at the grocery store and farmers' markets during this time of the year.
- Choose bunches that are dark green.
- Store in the refrigerator unwashed in an open plastic bag.
- Store in the refrigerator for up to 5 days.

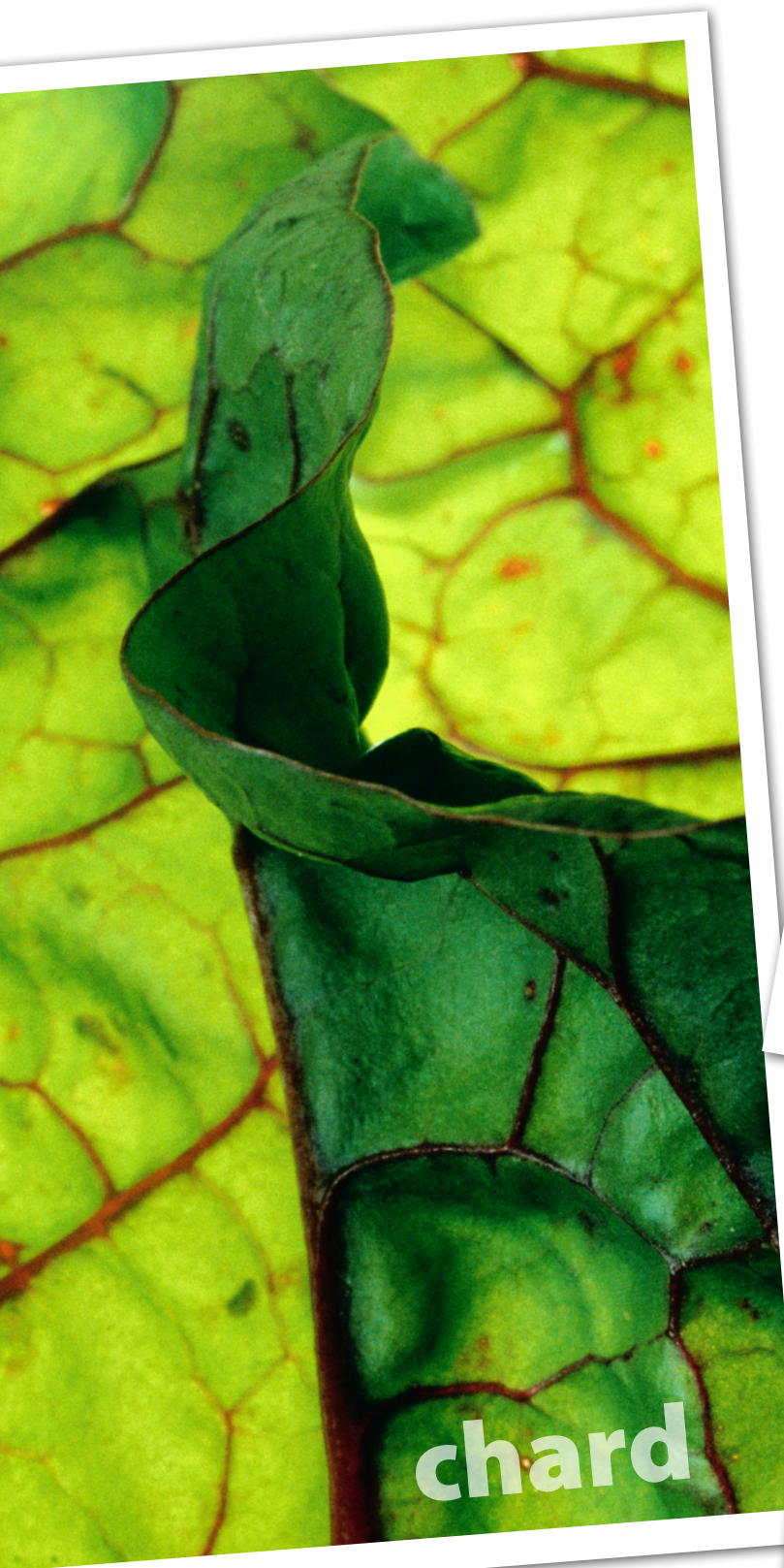
Preparation Tips

- For a bright green color, cook broccoli in a small amount of water in a covered pot. After a few minutes remove the cover to let the steam out. Cover the pot again and cook until crisp, but tender.
- Broccoli is great in stir fries. Excellent on baked potatoes, too!
- Add broccoli to salads, soups, stews, and casseroles.

Fresh Ideas

- Raw broccoli served with low-fat dip or hummus makes a great snack.
- Sprinkle low fat shredded cheese over cooked broccoli. Broccoli and cheese is great on baked potatoes, too!

Chard



Selection and Storage

- Check your local farmers' market for chard in spring and fall. The flavor of chard is best when it is fresh and the leaves are tender.
- Store leaves unwashed in the refrigerator in plastic bags for 2 - 3 days.
- Wash before preparing.

Preparation Tips

- Chard can be steamed, roasted, or sautéed.
- Can be used instead of spinach in recipes.
- Remove the stems and cook the leaves in a small amount of olive oil with onions and garlic.
- Add to soup for color, flavor and nutrition. Chard is especially good in bean soup.
- Use steamed chard leaves instead of cabbage leaves in your favorite stuffed cabbage roll recipe.

Fresh Ideas

- Remove the thick stem from the leaves, then chop the stems and saute before adding the leaves. The stems add color and texture to your dish!
- Add to tossed salads for extra flavor. Young children can help combine and stir salad ingredients.
- Try growing rainbow chard. It is easy to grow in the spring or fall.

Peas



Selection and Storage

- Fresh peas are a spring veggie. Look for peas at local grocery stores and farmers' markets in June and early July. You can buy frozen peas all year long.
- Store fresh peas in the refrigerator and use within 3 - 5 days.
- To shell peas, pinch the stem off and pull the string down the length of the pod. The pod will pop open and the peas can be pushed out.

Preparation Tips

- Add frozen or fresh peas to green salads. Peas are also good in tuna and chicken salad.
- Add peas to macaroni and cheese for added flavor and color.
- Frozen peas only need to be thawed before adding to pasta salad.

Fresh Ideas

- Eat thawed frozen peas for a snack.
- Add peas to favorite dishes, such as pasta, mac and cheese, and rice dishes.

strawberries

Strawberries

Selection and Storage

- Strawberry season in Maryland is May and June.
- Choose bright red, firm strawberries.
- Store unwashed in the refrigerator for up to 3 days.
- Place washed strawberries on a cookie sheet and put in the freezer for a few hours to quick freeze. Then add to freezer bags for storage in the freezer.

Preparation Tips

- Eat whole as a snack.
- Add to fruit salads and cereal.
- Use as a topping for low-fat ice cream, whole grain pancakes, or waffles.
- For a quick breakfast, whip up a healthy smoothie by putting yogurt, strawberries, and milk in a blender.

Fresh Ideas

- Take a trip to a "pick your own" farm to experience picking (and sampling) your own strawberries.
- Kids can help with preparing strawberries by gently washing them and removing the stems.

Summer Squash



Selection and Storage

- Squash is in season in July and August. Look for low prices and fresh squash at your local farmers' market and grocery store.
- Wash squash and serve a few days after purchase for best flavor.
- Select small to medium-size squash that are shiny with no soft spots or wrinkled skin.

Preparation Tips

- Wash, slice, and stir fry until just tender. Add tomatoes and Italian seasonings. Serve as a vegetable or add chicken or beef for a main dish.
- Shred squash and add to meatloaf, meatballs, burgers, muffins, and breads.
- Use squash slices in salad in place of cucumber.

Fresh Ideas

- For a healthy snack, cut thin slices and serve with low-fat ranch dressing. You'll love the crunch!
- Squash grow quickly and easily in the garden. Even young children can pick them and help with simple preparation.

Melons



Selection and Storage

- Melons are in season June through September.
- Look for melons without soft spots and a stem that is dry and brown.
- Store whole melons in the refrigerator if they will fit. Otherwise, store in a cool area.
- Cut melon should be stored in the refrigerator in a covered container.
- Use melons within a few days of purchase.

Preparation Tips

- Wash outside of melon with cold water before slicing.
- For a fruit kabob, put melon and other fresh fruit on skewers. Serve with low-fat vanilla yogurt for dipping.
- Mix with other fruit for a colorful fruit salad.
- Serve as a dessert with some frozen yogurt or low-fat ice cream.

Fresh Ideas

- Scoop melon into balls with a melon baller. Use in fruit salad or for an easy snack any time of day.
- Melons are great plain, sliced on cereal or mixed with yogurt.

Peppers



Selection and Storage

- Low in cost from early August to mid-September. Buy extra, remove seeds and chop. Freeze in baggies for adding to casseroles, skillet meals and soup.
- Store in a plastic bag in the refrigerator for up to 5 days.
- Choose peppers with firm skin and stems. Wash and remove seeds before preparing to eat.

Preparation Tips

- Cook on the grill for great flavor.
- Cut in half and remove seeds. Fill with a mixture of rice, tomato soup, and lean ground beef. Top with cheese and bake at 350 degrees for 1 hour.
- Add to salads, pasta, pizza, stir fry, salsa, or fajitas.
- Serve pepper rings with a sandwich.

Fresh Ideas

- Save the seeds from a green pepper plant. Plant the seeds in a container and watch them grow.
- Have a taste test with different colored peppers to see which ones your family likes best.
- Kids enjoy dipping pepper strips into low-fat dressing.

Tomatoes



Selection and Storage

- Tomatoes are in season in Maryland from late May to early November. Look for low prices and fresh tomatoes at your local farmers' market.
- Store at room temperature away from direct sunlight. When ripe, eat within one week.

Preparation Tips

- Serve with an egg on whole grain toast for breakfast.
- Toss cherry tomatoes with olive oil, salt, and pepper. Roast in the oven at 425 degrees for 10 minutes. Serve over pasta or as a pizza topping.
- Add chopped tomatoes to vegetables and serve over pasta or rice.
- Chopped tomatoes can be frozen for use in sauces or other cooked dishes.

Fresh Ideas

- Add sliced tomatoes to grilled cheese sandwiches.
- Make homemade salsa. Chop tomatoes and onions, mix with black beans and corn to make a great salsa.
- Snack on grape tomatoes!

Winter Squash



Selection and Storage

- Winter squash includes butternut, spaghetti, acorn, and hubbard squash, as well as pumpkins.
- Winter squash is in season in stores and farmers' markets in August, September, and the beginning of October.
- Store in a cool, dark place. Use within 3 - 5 weeks.

Preparation Tips

- Wash and cut acorn squash in half. Remove seeds and bake in the oven or microwave until tender. Fill the "bowl" with a small amount of butter, brown sugar, salt, and pepper.
- You can steam, sauté, grill, or bake squash.
- Winter squash makes a wonderful addition to soup.

Fresh Ideas

- Mashed hubbard or butternut squash is great. Cut squash in half and remove seeds. Microwave until soft. Scoop out the squash, mash until smooth, and season with butter, salt, and pepper.
- Make "spaghetti". Cut spaghetti squash in half and cook in the microwave until it is fork-tender. Scrape the "spaghetti" out with a fork and top with a small amount of butter or oil and sprinkle with cinnamon.

Cabbage



Selection and Storage

- Look for good prices on cabbage from June to September in local grocery stores and farmers' markets.
- Choose cabbage heads with tight leaves.
- Store in the refrigerator for up to 7 days.

Preparation Tips

- Chop and add to pasta, soup, or stew.
- Great in salads or as coleslaw.
- Wash and cut into quarters. Cook in a crock pot with potatoes and a ham slice.
- Can be steamed, boiled, microwaved, or stir fried.
- For homemade coleslaw, stir together shredded cabbage, $\frac{2}{3}$ cup low-fat mayo, 2 tablespoons each of vegetable oil and vinegar, and a sprinkle of sugar and salt to taste.

Fresh Ideas

- Shred and use as a taco topping instead of lettuce.
- Add shredded cabbage to diced pears and apples and serve with low-fat yogurt.

Potatoes



Selection and Storage

- Available year round in the grocery store, or July through September at farmers' markets. Potatoes are inexpensive, too.
- Select firm and fairly smooth potatoes.
- Avoid potatoes that have sprouted or have wrinkled skin, cut surfaces, or green or dark areas.
- Store in a cool, dark place for up to 3-5 weeks.

Preparation Tips

- Potatoes can be added to soups, stews or casseroles.
- Cut white or sweet potatoes into bite-size pieces. Toss with a small amount of oil, salt, and pepper. Spread on a cookie sheet and bake until brown and crisp at 375 degrees.
- Easy to bake in the oven or microwave. Pierce potatoes with a fork before cooking.

Fresh Ideas

- Kids can scrub whole potatoes to help with the cooking.
- Add toppings to baked potatoes to make a complete meal. Try broccoli, grated cheese, chili, or low-fat sour cream.