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FEBRUARY 2012 E-NEWS

It may be hard to keep resolutions to eat healthy, but these tips will help. Roast root vegetables, like parsnips and beets, with a nice herb blend or honey glaze for a delicious side dish. Bake sweet potatoes as crispy chips or serve mashed with a little butter and cinnamon. Sauté fresh kale, Swiss chard and other leafy greens with garlic, olive oil and some crushed red pepper. Fresh produce options during the winter can be simply divine.

THE PRODUCE BASKET



The term “superfood” is used quite a bit these days. Foods with multiple disease-fighting nutrients make the list. The good news is that most “super” fruits and vegetables are plentiful at N.C. farmers markets. Keep this list handy and incorporate the superfoods into your daily diet!

What makes a fruit or vegetable a superfood?

Some fruits and vegetables contain higher amounts of phytochemicals, like antioxidants and anthocyanins (the natural compounds that give a fruit its red, blue or purplish color). These nutrients can help reduce your risk of cancer, diabetes and heart disease. The combination of these compounds and the basic vitamins and minerals found in most fresh produce makes for a “superfood” that goes above and beyond in providing health benefits.

Which fruits and vegetables are considered superfoods?

- Beans
- Blueberries
- Broccoli
- Leafy Greens
- Oats
- Oranges
- Pumpkins
- Tomatoes
- Sweet Potatoes
- Walnuts



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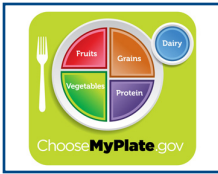
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WHAT'S IN SEASON?

Apples, Arugula, Beets, Carrots,
Green Onions, Peanuts, Sweet
Potatoes, Swiss Chard, Winter Squash

KEEP IT FRESH

- Wash fresh produce just before preparing, not before storing.
- Freeze produce in airtight containers, like resealable plastic bags or storage containers.
- Store fruits and vegetables in separate drawers; certain fruits (like apples) produce ethylene, which speeds up the ripening process of other produce (like broccoli).



USDA's "MyPlate" campaign encourages healthy eating choices.

www.choosemyplate.gov

USING YOUR PRESERVED PRODUCE

Let's face it, root vegetables and greens are great, but you could sure go for a sweet strawberry, juicy peach or other warm weather favorite in February. That's why it's a great idea to preserve produce leading up to the winter months! By freezing, canning, pickling or using other means of preservation for fresh produce, you open the door to a taste of summer all year. Here are a few ideas for using preserved fruits and vegetables.

- **Soups, stews and salsas** – A wide variety of culinary veggies can contribute to a wonderful winter stew, including beans, carrots, peas, squash and more. Canned tomatoes make excellent salsas.
- **Succulent strawberries** – Frozen berries that are thawed are softer and juicier than fresh berries, and they're good for more than shakes and smoothies. Try putting them on pancakes, adding to a yogurt parfait or topping a salad (**Strawberry & Spinach Salad**).
- **Beautiful blueberries** – In addition to the featured fruit smoothie recipe, blueberries are a simple and tasty addition to oatmeal, cereal and salads.



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GOOD TASTE

FROZEN FRUIT BLAST SMOOTHIE

1 cup frozen fruit (like blueberries, peaches or strawberries)
1/2 cup skim milk
1/2 cup nonfat vanilla or plain yogurt
1 tsp. honey

Put all the ingredients in a blender. Process until smooth. Serves 2.

DID YOU KNOW?

- February is American Heart Month – heart disease is the leading cause of death in the United States.
- Eating a diet of fruits and vegetables can reduce your risk of heart disease and enhance your overall health.
- The USDA suggests that fruits and vegetables make up half of every meal.

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