
Seasonal Food

By Angela Stanford, MBA, RD, RYT

Mother Nature has given us a road map on how to eat seasonally. We should focus on eating the majority of our food grown in season in our local environmental to maximize health.

Spring – deep leafy greens like spinach, chard, kale and radishes – filled with water, chlorophyll, minerals from the soil, and phytonutrients to aid in detoxification of the body in this season of renewal, helping us shed excess weight and toxins from a more sedentary lifestyle during the winter months.

Summer – colorful fruits like berries, peaches, and plums – filled with water to cool us down and sugar to give us extra energy on the longer, hotter days. Veggies like cucumbers, parsley and mint are also good for cooling down in the heat.

Fall – storage foods – filled with complex carbohydrates like squash, pumpkin, sweet potatoes and seeds to help us store energy, and preserve it for the colder winter months ahead.

Winter – citrus fruits like lemons, limes, grapefruits and oranges – filled with water to combat the dry air and Vitamin C to boost immunity to ward off colds and flu; also eat avocados and nuts filled with healthy fats and vitamin E to help insulate us from the cold and reduce inflammation.

The majority of the time, the deeper the color of fruits and veggies, the more nutrient dense they are. Scientific evidence will back this up. As for containing more Chi, the Feng Shui term for energy or life force, that is for more contemplation. Basically, however, the more nutrient rich food, the more Chi it could/should provide to the body. That said, our bodies need to be in a healthy enough state to receive and absorb this nutrition and powerful energy.

A basic backyard, patio or windowsill garden is an easy way to ensure you are eating some seasonal foods. It should be a few basic herbs like parsley, mint, cilantro, thyme and oregano and stevia. They all grow easily from seed and can be grown indoors and out. These herbs can be used in several beverages and meals to enhance digestion or just spice up a meal.

I LOVE FOOD, period. Growing and cooking foods has been a part of my life since I was 7. I learned the basic from my mother, Cleonne, in our kitchen and large garden on our family farm in Illinois. Eating seasonally was the only way I knew. I also learned preservation of food since we couldn't grow anything outside in frozen earth covered with snow. Several years later, after 4-H cooking awards and high school home economics classes, I found myself in college studying nutrition and working part-time in hospital kitchens.

After graduation I became a Registered Dietitian and preferred being in the kitchen or education the community about healthy eating. Rather than walking hospital corridors working with pharmaceuticals, I preferred working with food. An overseas stint in Australia, and later marrying my wonderful husband James from Turkey, further broadened my palate of international cuisine. I now blend in with my traditional mid-west favorites to fuse the worlds into very creative dishes with vegan and gluten-free versions. My cooking and teaching are also influenced by my Yoga practice and study of Ayurveda, an ancient art of eating for health whose philosophies lie in eating with the seasons. *“Let Mother Nature be your Guide,”* I always say.

Vital Nutrition & Wellness™

I started my own food and nutrition consulting company in the early 2000s called Vital Nutrition & Wellness™ to teach people about where their food comes from. They will learn the power food choices that have to make each of us vibrantly, healthy, and strong, and learn how to nourish the earth so it can continue to feed us and our children for generations to come. I counsel individuals and families seeking support while making lifestyle changes including digestive issues, weight loss, detoxification, managing allergies, auto-immune conditions, pre and postnatal nutrition, and improving physical fitness. I also develop and deliver programs to adults, children and community groups about mindful eating, sustainable gardening and food sourcing, and the importance of eating seasonally. Basically, I am the “How to” coach. I teach people how to eat, shop, prepare and even grown food that is in season.

I am very blessed to work with people that want to improve their health and the health of their families through the power of food!