

Our Complete Seasonal Produce Guide: Here's When Every Fruit and Vegetable Is Ripe (and Tastes the Best)

 marthastewart.com/8383524/seasonal-produce-guide

Sure, you can get most fruits and vegetables year round, but many are incomparably delicious when in season. A tomato in the middle of winter simply can't compete with the juicy brightness of a local tomato in summer—and biting into a perfectly ripe peach is one of this season's greatest pleasures. Then there are the fruits and vegetables that are total seasonal delicacies, like spring's ramps and sour cherries. They're only around for a short time, so you want to be sure to snag them while you can—or wait a year until they're next available.

Use our handy guide to determine which vegetables and fruits are in season and when, so you can plan your farmer's market grocery list and recipes around peak produce.

[Our Definitive Guide to Washing Fresh Fruit](#)



Xsandra / GETTY IMAGES

Why You Should Eat Seasonal Produce

"In-season fruits have a depth and brightness of flavor that out-of-season produce just can't compare to," says Marque Collins, a chef at [Tullibee](#), a Minneapolis restaurant that focuses on locally-sourced foods for its Nordic cuisine.

Eating in-season is also more sustainable, allowing us to purchase locally grown produce—which can be more economical—and it also tends to be healthier. "When produce is picked for consumption after being harvested at the right time, the flavor tends to be the freshest and the nutrients are better preserved," says Carlie Williams, registered dietitian nutritionist with [Factor](#), a ready-prepared meals service. "When produce is stored for long periods of time, the nutrient content may be reduced and chemicals are often used to secure out-of-season harvest, which can have a negative impact on the environment."

Produce That Isn't Seasonal

Figuring out what fruits and vegetables to eat and when can be a little confusing, especially as certain popular produce items—such as apples, carrots, potatoes, lemons, and bananas—are available year round due to different growing regions, the use of greenhouses, modern storage, and imports. Also, depending on where you live, you might find some slight variations regarding what's in season and what's coming soon.

"Most tropical fruits are pretty consistent, as their home environment stays warm most of the time," Collins says. If you live in an apple-growing area like the Pacific Northwest or the North East, you'll see local apples in the fall—but a range of apples are available all year round in the grocery store. "Squash, beets, and the onion (allium) family all grow fairly consistently and cellar well," says Collins.

Spring

Many types of produce are harbingers of this welcome season. As soon as [asparagus](#) appears at the local farmers' market, you know it's spring. "Fresh asparagus and ramps are exciting for me, because they mean the end of winter and that spring has finally come," Collins says. Spring, especially for those in colder climates, starts slowly before exploding into a plethora of fruit and vegetable choices, including strawberries, [rhubarb](#), artichokes, green beans, spring greens, and, of course, ramps.

Available now until mid-May, [ramps have exploded in popularity in the last few years](#). While you probably won't find them in the supermarket, you may at your local farmers' market—or you might see them on a restaurant menu. They taste like a cross between onions and garlic.

Enjoy spring produce while you can; most of the fruits and vegetables that appear this season will be gone by the end of June.



alvarez / GETTY IMAGES

Spring Fruits and Vegetables

- Artichokes
- Asparagus
- Fava beans
- Peas
- Ramps
- Watercress
- Spinach
- Strawberries
- Rhubarb

Plus, look out for produce that peaks in late spring, at the cusp of summer:

- Apricots
- Sweet cherries
- Green beans
- Lettuces
- Radishes

Summer



Joanne Liu / GETTY IMAGES

This is the season for splurging on pints and quarts of ripe blueberries, juicy raspberries, and tasty blackberries. It's also a blessed time of year when that aforementioned produce overlaps with strawberries—and when apricots, plums, peaches, and other stone fruits are at their peak. Get them while you can: Strawberry season ends by early July across most of the United States, sour cherries are available *only* in July for the most part, and raspberries, blackberries, and sweet cherries will be out of season come August.

Beyond berries and other fruits, summer is also the season to enjoy the best tomatoes of the year, the sweetest corn on the cob, the freshest lettuce and cucumbers, and summer squash like zucchini.

Summer Fruits and Vegetables

- Blueberries
- Raspberries
- Blackberries
- Cantaloupe
- Honeydew melon
- Nectarines

- Peaches
- Plums
- Sour cherries
- Tomatoes
- Corn
- Eggplant
- Okra
- Shell beans
- Lettuce
- Cucumbers
- Watermelon
- Zucchini and other summer squash

These fruits and vegetables come into season at the end of summer, in early fall:

- Beets
- Bell peppers
- Chile peppers
- Figs

Fall

As the heat of summer makes way for fall, enjoy the last of fresh local tomatoes. Try them in every color and size. This is also a good time to preserve summer produce, whether in homemade tomato sauce or jams, jellies, pickles, and preserves. Figs come into season at the end of the summer and are available in the early fall. Stock up while they're available; eat them fresh or turn them into jam.

Fall, of course, brings apples and apple picking—and apple pie. It's also peak pear season. Be sure to seek out another pome fruit: the quince. Unlike apples and pears, the quince makes a short-lived appearance at markets—it's only available through December. Enjoy them roasted or poached, bake them into a pie, whip up a batch of jelly or butter, or braise them in a tagine.



Aleksandr Zubkov / GETTY IMAGES

Fall Fruits and Vegetables

- Apples
- Pears
- Quince
- Cranberries
- Grapes
- Persimmons
- Acorn squash
- Butternut squash
- Pumpkin
- Cabbage
- Chanterelle mushrooms
- Cauliflower
- Kale
- Kohlrabi
- Spaghetti squash
- Sweet potatoes
- Swiss chard

These fruits and vegetables come into season at the end of fall—so prepare accordingly:

- Brussels sprouts
- Escarole
- Pomegranates
- Rutabagas
- Turnips

Winter



Jun / GETTY IMAGES

Winter, especially in the Northern United States, can be challenging for the locally food-obsessed eater. Brighten up the depths of the season by eating citrus and kiwifruit—and by enjoying the end of pomegranate season. Vegetable-wise, broccoli, collards, other hearty greens, and root vegetables are mainstays.

Now is the best time to explore succulent citrus like pomelos, blood oranges, Meyer lemons, and key limes. And you'll want to get your fill of kiwi fruits, which will be out of season by early spring in most of the country.

Rutabagas and turnips are hardy root vegetables that first appear in markets in the fall. Like beets, they are keepers so you'll find local ones at the market long after they were harvested. But don't think that root vegetables are all that's in season in the winter; look for less well-known greens like radicchio. With its bitter, almost spicy flavor, radicchio is just the thing for waking up a tired winter palate, in a salad (with citrus!) or braised or sautéed.

Winter Fruits and Vegetables

- Citrus (including blood oranges, clementines, grapefruit, Meyer lemons, cara cara oranges, and key limes)
- Broccoli
- Collard greens
- Celery root
- Radicchio
- Rutabagas
- Turnips