

How can you keep and eat healthy this winter.

It's easy to eat right during the summer months with an abundance of fresh produce available from a wide variety of sources. But as winter rolls around, those juicy ears of corn are just a memory. That doesn't mean, however, that you drop your healthy eating habits with the dropping temperatures.

You still need to get your five servings a day of fruits and vegetables. Make an effort to include fruits and vegetables at every meal. Since your options are more limited during the winter months, now's the time to get creative by trying new recipes as well as sampling produce you haven't eaten before.

Winter brings a bumper crop of root vegetables like turnips, rutabagas and parsnips; squash; brussels sprouts; and more. Apples and pumpkins are the foundation of a variety of comforting, homey desserts. Here are some tips to help you chase away the winter chill by adding the flavors and healthy benefits of winter produce.

As always, the key to buying the best produce is to know what you're looking for. No matter what the season, look for fruits and vegetables with good color; stay away from produce with bruising, blemishes, soft spots or shriveling.

Here are two delicious recipes sure to warm you up this winter:

Pesto Minestrone

This full-flavored soup is also full of healthy vegetables.

2 cups cauliflower (2 small heads), coarsely chopped

1 1/2 cups zucchini (1-2 medium), chopped

3 cans (14.5 ounces) chicken broth, reduced sodium

1 16-ounce can tomatoes, diced, drained

1 cup elbow macaroni or small pasta shells

3 cups kidney beans or black-eyed peas, drained and rinsed (1 cup dry makes 3 cups cooked) or 2 cans (15 ounces each)

1 cup carrot (1 medium), sliced

1 cup onion (1 medium), chopped

2 tablespoons olive oil (for pesto)

2 garlic cloves (for pesto)

1 cup basil leaves, fresh, loosely packed OR (for pesto)

1 cup Italian parsley plus 1 teaspoon dried basil leaves (for pesto)

1 tablespoon water

Directions

In a 5 to 6 quart saucepan bring to boil 1/2 cup water, tomatoes, cauliflower, onion and carrots; reduce heat and simmer covered 10 minutes or until vegetables are tender. Add zucchini, beans, broth and pasta. Return to a boil, reduce heat and simmer uncovered 10 minutes. Meanwhile put all pesto ingredients in food processor or blender and process until very finely chopped. Just before serving, remove soup from heat and stir in pesto. Makes 8 servings.

Golden Apple Oatmeal

Start your day off right with a steaming bowl of this hearty (and heart healthy) oatmeal.

1/2 cup Golden Delicious apples, diced

1/3 cup apple juice

1/3 cup water

1/8 teaspoon salt

Dash of cinnamon

Dash of nutmeg

1/3 cup quick-cooking rolled oats, uncooked

Directions

Combine apples, apple juice, water and seasoning; bring to a boil. Stir in rolled oats; cook 1 minute. Cover and let stand several minutes before serving. Makes a 1-cup serving.

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Source: <http://www.productsherbal.com>