

FRUIT AND VEGGIE OF THE MONTH

Strawberries

The Romans prized wild strawberries for their medicinal properties. Ounce for ounce, strawberries have more Vitamin C than citrus fruit. According to the American Cancer Society, foods rich in Vitamin C may lower the risk of cancers of the gastrointestinal tract. One cup of sliced fresh strawberries contains about 4 grams of fiber and only 50 calories! Actually members of the rose family, strawberries are consumed by 94% of United States households!



Strawberries qualify for three Superfoods categories: Brain, Heart, and Antioxidant. Eight medium strawberries (147g) provide more than 150 percent of the Daily Value of vitamin C, and are excellent source of manganese, as well as a good source of fiber, all for 45 calories. In addition, strawberries are loaded with brain healthy antioxidants, such as anthocyanins and quercetin, making them a Superfood for your brain. UCLA researchers found that strawberry extract suppressed proliferation of colon, prostate, and oral cancer cells. Tufts researchers found that strawberry-supplemented diets slowed and even reversed brain decline in animal studies. Another strawberry compound -- C3G -- could help with weight management by regulating appetite and increasing fat-burning.

Squash

Squash comes in [winter \(hard skin\)](#) and [summer \(soft skin\)](#) varieties. Squash are fleshy vegetables protected by a hard rind. They belong to the plant family that includes melons and cucumbers. The skin and rind of summer squash are rich in the nutrient carotene, but the fleshy portion of this vegetable is not. To gain the full nutritional benefit of squash, the skins or rinds must be eaten.



Squash has been a staple for the Native Americans for more than 5000 years, and was a mainstay for early Europeans who settled in America. George Washington and Thomas Jefferson were enthusiastic squash growers. In the nineteenth century, merchant seamen returned from other parts of the Americas with many new varieties. This resulted in the various colors, shapes, and sizes that are available today.

Even though some varieties grow on vines while others grow on bushes, squash are commonly divided into the two groups, summer and winter. There are several types of summer squash but zucchini is the most popular summer squash purchased in the United States.

Squash are very low in calories. A one half cup serving has 20 calories and no fat.

Squash varieties include:



Butternut Squash: A Superfood for your [skin](#) and [eyes](#), Butternut squash provides 460% of daily [vitamin A](#) as beta-carotene and 50% of daily [vitamin C](#) per serving as well as a top source of [anti-aging vitamin E](#). This nutrient trio supports healthy skin by stimulating collagen turnover and defending epithelial cells against free-radical damage from ultraviolet radiation that can lead to wrinkles and age spots. Butternut gets sweeter and more flavorful with age.



Pumpkin: Pumpkin is a top squash source of beta-cryptoxanthin and alpha-carotene, high levels of which were linked to a 63%

lower risk of lung cancer in one Harvard study. A recent British study found that people with the highest intake of beta-cryptoxanthin had half the risk of developing polyarthritis. Don't skip the seeds. An ounce of dried pumpkin seeds provide a quarter of your daily iron needs, 40% of magnesium and 45% of manganese needs.



Spaghetti Squash: Resembling a bright-yellow watermelon with stringy flesh and a mild flavor, spaghetti squash lends itself well to a variety of seasonings. A cooked cup of spaghetti squash has only 40 calories, so savvy weight watchers swap or supplement pasta noodles with spaghetti squash. Deeper color indicates more beta-carotene.

Summer squash: One cup serving provides an excellent source of vitamin C, as well as a good source of vitamin B6. In addition, this summer squash is also high in the carotenoid antioxidants, lutein and zeaxanthin, both of which promote eye health.



Acorn Squash: Acorn is a Superfood for your Heart, providing 26% of potassium (for lower blood pressure), 36% of fiber (for lower cholesterol), 20% of vitamin B6 (to help regulate homocysteine) and 20% of magnesium (to support proper dilation of blood vessels). Excellent food for athletes, acorn squash provides 20% of daily thiamin, low levels of which may impair sports performance. Try Stuffed Acorn Squash with Apples and Cranberries.