

Fruit and Veggie of the Month

Pears

In popular U.S. fruits, pears rank second to the apple. Pears are actually fruit relatives of the apple, referred to by Homer as “gifts from the gods”. There are more than 3,000 known varieties in the world. United States production comes from states in the Northwest, plus New York, Pennsylvania, Michigan, and California. Imports come from South America, Canada, New Zealand, and South Africa. With the varieties and extended growing seasons, pears of all sizes and colors are available year-round. Pears have many nutritional benefits including no cholesterol, sodium, or saturated fat. They offer a natural, quick source of energy due largely to high amounts of two monosaccharide: fructose and glucose, plus levulose, one of the sweetest of known natural sugars. Fresh pears offer dietary fiber, much of it in the form of Pectin. Besides being a good source of fiber, pears are rich in Potassium, and are good sources of vitamin C.



Spinach

Spinach is believed to be of Persian origin and introduced into Europe in the 15th century. Since the early 19th century, spinach has been a very commonly used vegetable in the United States. It is available fresh, canned and frozen. It can be eaten raw or cooked.

Spinach may be one of the healthiest foods on earth, qualifying for six Superfood categories: **Heart, Eyes, Brain, Skin, Bones, and Immunity.**

One and a half cups raw (85g) provides a top source of **folate, potassium, and magnesium**, as well as an excellent source of **manganese**, and vitamins **A, C, and K**. This same serving also provides a good source of **iron** and has just 20 calories. In addition, spinach is a top source of the eye-healthy **carotenoids lutein and zeaxanthin**, which have shown to **lower risk of cataract development**. While spinach is very high in calcium, it is also high in oxalates- minerals that interfere with calcium's bioavailability (i.e., the body's ability to use calcium). However, there's evidence that **cooking fruits and vegetables can significantly reduce a food's oxalate content**. In addition, Popeye's favorite may help **maintain mental sharpness** and reduce the risk of **cancers of the liver, ovaries, colon and prostate**.

