

# summerfresh

Top tips • Quick meals • Best buys • Nutritional advice for summer fruit and vegetables by Rosemary Stanton OAM PhD



**SYDNEY MARKETS**

Supplying quality fresh fruit & vegetables

## white nectarines

**to buy** Choose plump nectarines that are just soft to touch around the stem with a fragrant aroma. Avoid fruit with green skin around the stem.

**to store** Leave nectarines in a single layer at room temperature, out of direct sunlight, to soften. Fruit is ready to eat when it yields to gentle pressure.

**meal in a flash** Wrap wedges of white nectarines in thin slices of pancetta and secure with toothpicks. Spray with olive oil and barbecue for a few minutes on each side and serve.



## tomatoes

**to buy** Choose even-coloured red tomatoes with undamaged skin. Vine-ripened tomatoes should have a rich red colour.

**to store** Leave tomatoes stem-side up and in a single layer, at room temperature, out of direct sunlight, until ripe. Ripe tomatoes are rich red in colour with a distinct aroma. Allow 2–3 days for red tomatoes and 5–7 days for pale red tomatoes to fully ripen.

**fresh for kids®** When adding tomato to sandwich fillings for the school lunch box, place the sliced tomato between slices of cheese, ham and/or leafy salad greens to prevent the bread from becoming soggy.



## capsicums

**to buy** Choose fleshy capsicums with bright, glossy unwrinkled skin. Red, orange and yellow varieties are sweetest.

**to store** Store capsicums in the crisper section of the fridge. Use within 3–4 days.

**to prepare** Halve capsicum lengthways and remove the stem, seeds and white membranes. Slice or chop as desired.

**cook's tip** To grill and peel: cut prepared capsicums into thick strips and grill, skin-side up, until the skin blackens and blisters. Place in a plastic bag to cool. Peel and use flesh as desired.



## baby cos lettuce

**to buy** Select compact baby Cos lettuce with crisp, elongated pale-green leaves. Avoid lettuce with wilting or damaged leaves.

**to store** Store lettuce, unwashed, in a plastic bag on the lowest shelf in the fridge. Use within 3 days.

**to prepare** Trim the base and separate the leaves from the centre core. Wash leaves in cold water and dry well. Place leaves in a plastic bag in the fridge for 30 minutes to 1 hour before serving for extra crispness.



## passionfruit

**to buy** Choose passionfruit that feels heavy for its size. Slightly wrinkled skin indicates the passionfruit is ripe. When buying the Panama variety choose plump fruit with smooth unwrinkled skin.

**to store** Leave passionfruit in a cool place for up to 1 week. For longer storage, keep in the fridge.

**to prepare** Cut fruit in half and scoop out the pulp. Discard the leathery skin.

**meal in a flash** Swirl passionfruit pulp through thick natural reduced fat yoghurt and serve with muesli for breakfast.



## radishes

**to buy** Select firm rosy-coloured radishes with crisp, fresh-looking leaves. Avoid soft, cracked or limp radishes.

**to store** Trim and discard the leafy green tops, leaving about 5cm stems attached to the radishes. Place in a plastic bag in the fridge. Use within 3–4 days.

**to prepare** Trim the stems and roots. Wash in cold water, gently scrubbing with a soft brush to remove any dirt. Place in iced water for 1 hour for extra crispness. Leave whole or slice as desired.

**cook's tip** Add finely sliced radishes to coleslaw and leafy green salads.





## honeydew melon

**to buy** Select whole honeydew melon that feels heavy for its size with firm, even-coloured smooth skin. The stem button should be dry and free of cracks. Skin colour depends on variety. Cut fruit should have moist light to medium green flesh.

**to store** Store whole honeydew melon in a cool, well ventilated place for up to 5 days. Cover cut fruit with plastic wrap and store in the fridge. Use within 2–3 days.

**meal in a flash** Serve honeydew wedges topped with shaved smoked leg ham and thinly sliced feta cheese. Drizzle with extra virgin olive oil, season and serve.



## apricots

**to buy** Choose plump apricots with golden to deep orange-coloured skin and a sweet fragrance. Avoid hard apricots and those with a green skin around the stem as this indicates the fruit is immature.

**to store** Leave apricots in a single layer at room temperature, out of direct sunlight, until they yield to gentle pressure.

**meal in a flash** Dip halved apricots in demerara or caster sugar. Char-grill for 1–2 minutes each side until golden and caramelised. Serve with thick yoghurt.

## mint

**to buy** Common or garden mint (round leaves), spearmint (elongated leaves) and Vietnamese mint (not a true mint with purple-tinged spicy flavoured leaves) are the most readily available varieties. Select vivid-coloured mint with firm leaves and no signs of wilting.

**to store** Store mint, unwashed, in an airtight container or plastic bag in the fridge. Use within 2–3 days.

**to prepare** Wash well in cold water and strip the leaves from the stems. Pat dry. If using leaves in salads, place in a plastic bag in the fridge for 30 minutes to crisp leaves before using.



## rambutans

**to buy** Choose plump brightly-coloured rambutan that feel heavy for their size. The soft spikes on the skin should not look black or brittle.

**to store** Store rambutan, unpeeled, in a plastic bag or airtight container in the fridge. Use with 2–3 days.

**to prepare** Use a small sharp knife to cut the leathery skin around the centre of the rambutan. Then peel off the skin in two halves. Serve with the seed in or halve fruit lengthways and remove the seed, if desired.

**fresh for kids®** Add to fruit salads or serve them with a wedge of reduced fat cheese.



## zucchini

**to buy** Choose firm green or yellow zucchini with undamaged skin. Small to medium sized zucchini tend to have the most flavour.

**to store** Store in a plastic bag in the fridge or loose in the crisper section. Use within 4 days.

**to prepare** No need to peel, simply wash and trim the ends.

**meal in a flash** Slice zucchini lengthways, brush with olive oil and char-grill until just tender. Sprinkle with crumbled ricotta cheese and chopped mint. Drizzle with a little extra virgin olive oil, season and serve.

## best buys in summer

### DECEMBER

#### fruit

Apricots  
Bananas  
Berries – blackberries, blueberries, raspberries, red & white currants, strawberries  
Cherries  
Grapes  
Lychees  
Mangoes  
Melons  
Nectarines  
Oranges – Valencia  
Papaya  
Passionfruit  
Pawpaw  
Peaches  
Pineapple

#### vegetables

Asparagus  
Beans – green, flat, butter  
Capsicum  
Celery  
Cucumbers  
Eggplant  
Lettuce  
Onions – salad, green (shallots)  
Peas  
Radish  
Sweetcorn  
Tomatoes  
Watercress  
Zucchini

### JANUARY

#### fruit

Apricots  
Avocados  
Bananas  
Berries  
Berries – blackberries, blueberries, raspberries, strawberries  
Cherries  
Grapes  
Limes  
Lychees  
Mangoes  
Melons  
Nectarines  
Oranges – Valencia  
Passionfruit  
Peaches  
Pears – Williams  
Pineapple  
Plums  
Rambutans

#### vegetables

Asparagus  
Beans – green, flat, butter  
Capsicum  
Celery  
Cucumbers  
Eggplant  
Lettuce  
Onions – salad, green (shallots)  
Okra  
Peas  
Potatoes  
Radish  
Sweetcorn  
Tomatoes  
Zucchini

### FEBRUARY

#### fruit

Avocados  
Berries – blueberries, raspberries, strawberries  
Figs  
Grapes  
Limes  
Lychees  
Mangosteens  
Melons  
Nectarines  
Oranges – Valencia  
Passionfruit  
Peaches  
Pears – Howell, Williams  
Pineapple  
Plums  
Prickly Pears  
Rambutans

#### vegetables

Avocados  
Beans – butter, flat, green, snake  
Capsicums  
Celery  
Chillies  
Choko  
Cucumbers  
Eggplant  
Lettuce  
Onions – salad, green (shallots)  
Okra  
Peas  
Radish  
Squash  
Sweetcorn  
Tomatoes  
Zucchini

## valencia oranges

**to buy** Choose oranges with firm, glossy skin. The juiciest oranges feel heavy for their size. In late summer their skin can become green-tinged; this occurs naturally on the tree and does not affect taste or quality.

**to store** Leave oranges at room temperature, out of direct sunlight, for up to 1 week. For longer storage, store in the fridge.

**fresh for kids®** Freeze quartered oranges overnight in small plastic bags. Pop into the school lunchbox for a cool snack at recess.



## bbq vegetables by Rosemary Stanton OAM PhD

Whether you are concerned about general health, obesity, heart disease, cancer or osteoporosis, nutritionists are unanimous that you should eat more vegetables.

As well as vitamins, minerals and dietary fibre, vegetables contribute literally hundreds of antioxidants that help the body defend itself against health problems. Vegetables also bring balance – something that is often missing at a barbecue. Salads are great, but barbecued vegies attract even the most reluctant vegetable eaters.

### bbq vegie kebabs

For top benefits, thread button mushrooms, cherry tomatoes, chunks of capsicum or zucchini and slices of peeled sweet potato onto skewers, brush with a marinade of soy sauce, a little brown sugar and a dash of sesame oil and barbecue for about 10 minutes, turning often.

**TIP** – soak bamboo skewers in cold water for 15 minutes so they don't burn.

### Quick and easy bbq vegie ideas

**Zucchini** takes on a new life when barbecued. Slice lengthwise into 2 or 3 slices, spray with olive oil (optional, but it adds extra flavour) and barbecue on the grill for 2–4 minutes each side.

**Red and yellow capsicums** are delicious, halved or quartered, seeds removed and barbecued for 5–10 minutes. Or barbecue whole capsicums over a hot flame until blackened, place into a bowl, cover and leave for 5–10 minutes. When cool enough to handle, peel off the skin, remove seeds and serve with the juices. Removing the skin from capsicums makes them easier to digest.

**Onions** are delicious halved and cooked on the barbecue, cut side down until tender (about 15–25 minutes).

**Kumara** – peel and slice and barbecue for 5–10 minutes or until tender. Serve with a squeeze of orange juice.

**Asparagus** or **mushrooms** will barbecue in less than 5 minutes.

**Sweetcorn** – pull back the husks, leaving them attached at the bottom. Remove the 'silk' strings and re-wrap the husks around the corn, tying with string if necessary. Barbecue for 15–20 minutes, turning frequently. Peel back the husk and sprinkle with chopped parsley to serve.

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## Lycopene by Rosemary Stanton OAM PhD

Most people have heard of **beta carotene**, the coloured pigment in carrots and other brightly coloured fruits and vegetables. Beta carotene is famous mainly because it's converted to vitamin A in the body, but it's also an anti-oxidant that can 'mop up' damage within body cells.

Beta carotene is part of a large family (the carotenoids) with about 600 members. Most carotenoids aren't readily converted to vitamin A and were once ignored, but new research shows that many, including one called **lycopene**, may be valuable.

**Lycopene** is found mainly in **tomatoes**, although **guavas** and **rose hips** are also good sources and **pink grapefruit** and **watermelon** have some.

**Tomatoes** are the major source and the deeper their colour, the higher their lycopene. Rich red ripe tomatoes give a double whammy: top flavour and highest nutrient level.

Studies show that men who eat the most tomatoes (and tomato products such as tomato-based pasta sauces) have the lowest incidence of prostate cancer. There are also strong correlations between tomato intake and various other cancers and a lower incidence of heart disease in those with the highest intake of tomatoes.

Observational studies don't establish proof, and something else in tomatoes may be responsible, but lycopene is the current favourite for the observed health benefits.

**More lycopene is absorbed if tomatoes are cooked into a sauce that includes olive oil. Adding a few drops of olive oil to raw tomatoes also improves lycopene absorption.**

It's too early to credit all the health benefits among tomato eaters to lycopene. Tomatoes contain many other potentially beneficial compounds and no one is totally sure that lycopene holds all the answers. We're also discovering there are many complex interactions within the carotenoid family.

**But there seems little doubt that it makes good health sense to eat tomatoes regularly!**