

autumnfresh

Great tips for fresh fruit and vegetables

SYDNEY MARKETS™



baby eggplant

To buy

Choose slender, glossy-skinned baby eggplants about 12cm long that feel heavy for their size.

To store

Store eggplants in a plastic bag in the crisper in the fridge. Use within 2–3 days.

To prepare

Trim the green stem and slice as desired. For barbecuing or grilling, slice lengthways. There's no need to salt baby eggplants.

Whip up dinner

Brush or spray halved baby eggplants with oil and barbecue until tender. Serve with barbecued lamb cutlets, baby spinach leaves and tzatziki.



white radish (Daikon)

To buy

Select long, firm, white radish that feels heavy for its size with fresh-looking green leaves attached.

To store

Trim green leaves leaving 2 cm attached. Store in the crisper in the fridge. Use within 3–4 days.

To prepare

Cut off the top and root. Peel with a vegetable peeler and shred or grate.

Whip up a salad

Toss shredded white radish with sliced cucumber and oak-leaf lettuce leaves. Drizzle with a soy dressing, sprinkle with toasted sesame seeds and serve.



ginger

To buy

Select plump, firm ginger with shiny skin. The least knobbly ginger is the easiest to peel.

To store

Store ginger in a paper bag in the crisper of the fridge for up to 1 week. To extend storage, place peeled ginger in a jar of dry sherry in the fridge for up to 6 weeks.

To prepare

Peel ginger with a vegetable peeler and grate, shred or slice. Ginger graters are available from kitchenware and Asian food shops.

Whip up dinner

Marinate chicken fillets for 30 minutes in a grated ginger, lime juice and red chilli marinade. Char-grill and serve with rice.



capsicums

To buy

Select glossy, smooth-skinned capsicums that feel heavy for their size. Choose from red, yellow, green, orange and purple capsicums.

To store

Store capsicums in the crisper in the fridge. Use within 5 days.

Cooking tip

After grilling or roasting capsicums, place in a plastic bag for 15 minutes – the steaming effect ensures easy peeling.

Fresh for Kids

Rapidly stir-fry chopped pork fillet with finely sliced red or yellow capsicum, fresh pineapple and sweet and sour sauce for a quick dinner. Serve with steamed rice.



kiwifruit

To buy

Look for plump, firm kiwifruit with undamaged skin.

To store

Leave kiwifruit at room temperature out of direct sunlight until the fruit yields to gentle pressure. Store ripe kiwifruit in the fridge. Use within 2 days.

To prepare

Halve fruit and eat with a spoon, or peel and slice as desired.

Fresh for Kids

Pop a halved ripe kiwifruit with a plastic spoon in the school lunch box.



avocados

To buy

Choose plump avocados that yield to gentle pressure for eating within 1–2 days. Allow 2–4 days for firm avocados to ripen. Shape and texture depends on variety.

To store

Leave avocados at room temperature out of direct sunlight. To speed ripening, place in a brown paper bag with a ripe banana. Store ripe avocados in the fridge. Use within 1–2 days.

To prepare

Cut lengthways around the seed and twist gently to separate the halves. Remove the seed with a sharp knife. Drizzle cut surfaces with lemon juice to prevent discolouration.



gai lan

To buy

Often sold as Chinese broccoli. Choose bunches with firm, even-sized, fleshy stems and crisp, dark green leaves. Small yellow or white flowers in bunches are common.

To store

Remove tie from bunch and store in a plastic bag in the vegetable crisper in the fridge. Use within 4 days.

To prepare

Trim stems and cut gai lan in half, separating leaves and stems. Wash well in cold water.

Cooking tip

When cooking gai lan, add the stems first and briefly cook before adding the leaves.



witlof

To buy

Also sold as chicory. Choose compact, pale white to light-green witlof, about 12–15 cm long with pale yellow or green tips. Leaves should be crisp and tightly-packed.

To store

Place witlof in a brown paper bag and store in the fridge. Use within 2–3 days.

To prepare

Trim the base and separate the leaves. Gently rinse and pat dry with paper towel.

Whip up a salad

Gently toss witlof leaves with sliced apple and toasted walnuts. Drizzle with a walnut or avocado oil salad dressing. Season and serve.



plums

To buy

Choose firm plums with smooth skin that feel heavy for their size. Skin and flesh colour depends on the variety.

To store

Leave at room temperature out of direct sunlight until fruit yields to gentle pressure. Store ripe plums in the fridge. Use within 2–3 days.

To prepare

Wash before using. To remove seeds from freestone plums, cut around the seed, twist gently to separate the halves and remove seed.

Fresh for kids

Layer sliced plums with reduced fat custard and crushed meringues in serving glasses.



wild rocket

To buy

Choose green, narrow-leafed wild rocket with crisp stems and no signs of yellowing or wilting leaves.

To store

Store wild rocket in a loose plastic bag in the crisper section of the fridge. Use within 2–3 days. Wash just before using.

To prepare

Wash well and dry in a salad spinner or with paper towel before using.

Whip up a salad

Combine wild rocket with sliced cherry tomatoes, toasted pine nuts and shaved parmesan cheese in a bowl. Drizzle with extra virgin olive oil, gently toss and serve.



quinces

To buy

Select golden-yellow quinces with a perfumed aroma. Avoid fruit with brown spots on the skin. Handle with care as quinces easily bruise.

To store

Leave at room temperature out of direct sunlight. Use within 2 weeks. Avoid stacking quinces.

To prepare

Using a sharp knife, peel, quarter and core quinces. They discolour once peeled or cut, so place in a bowl of water with lemon juice added.

Cooking tip

Bake or poach in a sweet syrup for at least 2 hours for their pale cream flesh to soften and develop a rich rosy-pink colour.



figs

To buy

Choose sweet-smelling, plump figs with just a little give around the stem.

To store

Figs are best left at room temperature and eaten within one day of purchase. For longer storage, place in a single layer in an airtight container in the fridge. Use within 2 days.

To prepare

The skin is edible. If preferred, peel figs, especially varieties with thick skin. If leaving the skin on, wash well and pat dry.

Whip up dinner

Serve halved figs with sliced rare roast beef, rocket leaves and shaved parmesan cheese. Drizzle with extra virgin olive oil and serve.

Best buys in autumn

MARCH

fruit

Apples
Bananas
Figs
Fuji fruit
Grapes
Guava
Kiwifruit
Limes
Mangosteens
Nashi
Oranges – Valencia
Passionfruit
Pawpaw
Pears
Plums
Pomegranates
Quinces
Tamarillo

vegetables

Asian Greens
Beans
Broccoli
Capsicums
Cucumbers
Eggplant
Ginger
Lettuce
Okra
Onions
Potatoes
Pumpkin
Sweetcorn
Tomatoes
White radish
Zucchini
Witlof

APRIL

fruit

Apples
Avocados
Bananas
Custard apples
Fuji fruit
Guava
Kiwifruit
Limes
Mandarins – Imperial
Nashi
Pears
Passionfruit
Persimmons
Pomegranates
Quinces
Tamarillo

vegetables

Asian greens
Broccoli
Brussels sprouts
Cabbages
Carrots
Cauliflower
Celery
Celeriac
Chestnuts
Fennel
Ginger
Leeks
Mushrooms
Okra
Peas
Potatoes
Pumpkins
Silverbeet
Spinach
Turnips
White radish
Witlof

MAY

fruit

Apples
Avocados
Custard apples
Kiwifruit
Lemons
Mandarins – Imperial
Nashi
Oranges – Navel
Pears
Persimmons
Pomegranates
Quinces
Rhubarb

vegetables

Asian greens
Broccoli
Brussels sprouts
Cabbages
Carrots
Cauliflower
Celery
Celeriac
Chestnuts
Fennel
Ginger
Leeks
Mushrooms
Okra
Parsnips
Silverbeet
Spinach
Sweet potatoes
Turnips
White radish
Witlof

By Dr Rosemary Stanton, nutritionist

Antioxidants

Q. What are antioxidants?

- A. Our bodies rely on oxygen for life, but as our cells use oxygen to produce vital energy, they produce molecules called free radicals.

These can damage tissues throughout the body. Antioxidants neutralise the effects of free radicals. Nature has provided us with the ability to produce our own antioxidants, but as we age, our antioxidant production appears to fall. Boosting our supply with the antioxidants in foods makes good sense.

Q. Which foods are rich in antioxidants?

- A. Fruits, vegetables, nuts, wholegrain cereals and tea all contain an array of antioxidants. Products made from fruits such as extra virgin olive oil (made from olives) or red wine (made from grapes) also contain antioxidants.

Dark bitter chocolate also contains some antioxidants.

Q. Which fruits and vegetables have the highest levels of antioxidants?

- A. There's no simple answer to that question because fruits and vegetables contain literally hundreds of different antioxidants and scientists are showing that various antioxidants play different – and complementary – roles within the body. Broccoli may be rich in certain antioxidants whereas citrus fruits have a different, but equally important range.

Some antioxidants also happen to be vitamins (including vitamins A, C and E and folate), but these ones are not necessarily more important than others.

Q. Can we just take antioxidant pills?

- A. Supplements of antioxidants have not been shown to have the same benefits as occur when we consume a range of fruits and vegetables.

The protective role of fruit and vegetables

Australia now has a 'two plus five' campaign, with the government encouraging us to eat at least two servings of fruit and five servings of vegetables every day. Mountains of research conclude that the single most important dietary change needed to improve health and reduce the risk of disease is to eat more fruit and vegies.

Fruits and vegetables protect us in several ways, reducing the risk of:

- Cardiovascular disease
- Some types of cancer
- Digestive problems such as constipation
- Excess weight
- Fruit and vegetables can also help control problems such as high blood pressure and diabetes.

How do fruit and vegetables provide protection?

- When we eat more fruit and vegetables, we are likely to eat less of the damaging fatty, sugary and salty foods.
- Fruit and vegetables are rich in protective vitamins, minerals and antioxidants.
- Fruits and vegetables contain specific anti-cancer agents and while research continues to identify many hundreds of anti-cancer compounds, the evidence is already sufficient to justify recommending fruit and vegies as cancer protective foods.
- Fruit and vegetables are excellent sources of different kinds of dietary fibre.

This helps the digestive system, initially slowing the release of glucose into the blood and then speeding up disposal of waste materials in the lower part of the intestine.

The kinds of fibre in fruit and vegies also promote the growth of healthy bacteria in the colon, which help protect us against colorectal cancer – the most common cancer in Australian men and women.