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Kitchen Diva

Autumn's Superstar Fruits & Vegetables

by ANGELA SHELF MEDEARIS

While the markets and grocery stores are brimming with beautiful fruits and vegetables in the warmer months, there's also a delicious variety of fruits and vegetables when the weather turns cooler. To stay healthy and ward off diseases, it's important to include fruits and vegetables in your diet year-round. Here are some of the superstar fruits and vegetables of the fall and winter months.

Sweet Potatoes

Loaded with beta-carotene (which the body makes into vitamin A), vitamin C, potassium, fiber, iron and vitamin B-6, sweet potatoes have more nutrients than regular white potatoes and can replace white potatoes in some recipes. Try them mashed, baked or as a dessert.

Apples

This traditional fall favorite is readily available in the supermarket, or you can pick your own at a nearby orchard. They are a quick, easy snack and can be paired with peanut butter or cheese for protein. Apples contain antioxidants, which may help protect against certain cancers and reduce levels of LDL, or bad cholesterol. Apples have vitamin C, vitamin K and fiber.

Broccoli

A versatile vegetable that can be eaten raw or cooked, hot or cold, by itself or with other foods. Broccoli can help prevent cancer and heart disease and boost the immune system. Nutrients in broccoli include vitamins C, A and B-6, iron, calcium, magnesium and vitamin E.

Green Beans

This vegetable is high in vitamin K, which protects red blood cells and helps reduce the severity of asthma, osteoarthritis and rheumatoid arthritis. They also contain vitamin C, potassium, folate, iron and magnesium.

Spinach

Dark green veggies contain a variety of nutrients that a healthy body needs. Spinach is packed with vitamin A, vitamin K, iron, folate, magnesium, vitamin C, calcium, potassium, fiber and vitamin E. Spinach also has antioxidants and anti-cancer agents. Frozen or fresh spinach can be added to just about any meal.

Winter Squash and Pumpkin

Winter squash includes acorn, butternut, Hubbard, spaghetti and turban and have hard, thick skins and seeds. Pumpkin is a great source of beta carotene, a powerful antioxidant that is good for the eyes. It also contains potassium. Canned or prepared fresh, pumpkin can be made into a variety of soups, baked goods and desserts.

Try this wonderful recipe for Crispy Pork Chops with Pumpkin Apple Butter. It's the perfect showcase for autumn fruits and vegetables.



Photo Credit: DepositPhotos

Crispy Pork Chops with Pumpkin Apple Butter

You can use fresh or canned and mashed sweet potatoes instead of the pumpkin puree. Any remaining Pumpkin Apple Butter will keep in the refrigerator for up to 2 weeks, or you can freeze it in an air-tight container for up to 3 months. It's also delicious on bread, pancakes or waffles. If you're pressed for time, a good quality, commercially made jar of pumpkin butter also will work well for this recipe.

- 1 (14-ounce) can pumpkin puree
- 1/2 cup apple juice
- 1/4 cup water
- 1/2 cup packed light brown sugar, stevia or agave syrup
- 1/8 teaspoon ground nutmeg or cloves
- 1 teaspoon ground ginger
- 1 teaspoon ground cinnamon
- 8 (1/4-inch thick) boneless pork chops
- 2 tablespoons poultry seasoning
- 1 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 1 1/2 teaspoons freshly ground black pepper
- 1/2 teaspoon cayenne pepper
- 1/2 cup Panko white or whole-wheat bread crumbs
- 1/2 cup all-purpose or whole-wheat flour
- 1 egg, beaten with 3 tablespoons of water
- 1/4 cup oil for frying

1. Whisk together pumpkin puree, apple juice, water, brown sugar, nutmeg, ginger and cinnamon in a saucepan until smooth. Bring to a boil, then reduce heat to medium-low and simmer until the mixture has reached the consistency of applesauce, about 10 minutes.

2. Meanwhile, sprinkle the pork chops with 1 tablespoon poultry seasoning, 1/4 teaspoon of the salt and pepper, and 1/4 teaspoon cayenne pepper.

3. In a medium bowl, mix together the bread crumbs, flour, the remaining 1 tablespoon of poultry seasoning, the remaining teaspoon of salt and black pepper, and the 1/4 teaspoon of cayenne pepper until well-combined. Pour the crumb mixture into a shallow dish.

4. Dip the pork chops in the egg, shake off excess. Firmly press the pork chops into the Panko mixture to coat on both sides.

5. Heat oil in a skillet over medium-high heat. Add breaded pork chops and cook until golden brown on both sides and cooked through, about 3 to 4 minutes per side. Remove and drain on a paper towel-lined plate.

6. Place 2 tablespoons of the pumpkin apple butter on each plate. Place the pork chops on the pumpkin butter. Serve with a side of steamed spinach, green beans or broccoli. Makes 8 pork chops.

Angela Shelf Medearis is an award-winning children's author, culinary historian and the author of seven cookbooks. Her new cookbook is "The Kitchen Diva's Diabetic Cookbook." Her website is www.divapro.com. To see how-to videos, recipes and much, much more, Like Angela Shelf Medearis, The Kitchen Diva! on Facebook. Recipes may not be reprinted without permission from Angela Shelf Medearis.

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Stickeler's Answer

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$$5/5 \times 5/5 = 100$$

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