

Though the days of summer have ended we can take heart that fall is the perfect time to take advantage of summer's bounty.

The tomatoes finally turned bright red, golden yellow, zebra striped and purple. Beautiful dark-green zucchini are abundant and soon pumpkin and squash will be ready to roast, bake or carve into Jack O'lanterns. Autumn as well as summer is a time to take advantage of nature's bounty. Enjoy the fall harvest with a trip to the local farmer's market, co-op or your own backyard garden.

Local foods travel less so they are fresher, less expensive and most-of-all, benefit the local farmers and businesses. These fruits and veggies contain nutrients like; vitamin A, vitamin C, potassium, fiber, anti-oxidants and phytochemicals, and can be preserved (freezing, canning, and drying) for use throughout the winter months when fresh, local produce isn't as abundant. Check the internet, libraries, bookstores, or even your local master gardener at a good nursery or WSU extension office for ideas on preserving.

Here are some things I do to make my summer/fall produce last a little longer:

- Shred or grate zucchini, squeeze out all moisture with paper towel or clean kitchen towel (flour cloth). Freeze in baggies. Take out and thaw to use in pasta sauces, bread, and soups. It's especially good mixed in marinara sauce with a little chopped soy sausage. I call it my vegetarian "Bolognese Sauce," a traditional Italian meat sauce.
- Use harvested basil to make pesto. Freeze the pesto in ice cube trays and when frozen remove cubes, place in baggies to use in dips, pasta sauces or soups
- Freeze blackberries on cookie sheets before transferring to bags or containers and use later in cobblers, smoothies, oatmeal, cereal, muffins, or other desserts.
- If you have an abundance of tomatoes and some are still green, place them in a paper bag to ripen. When ripened, whatever you can't use, freeze whole. They can be used in vegetarian soup stocks, sauces, and tomato-based soups.
- Since apples store well, and Washington is known for our spectacular apples, take full advantage of them. Use them in pies, cakes, and breads; slice them to use in salads or to dip in caramel sauce for a sweet and semi-healthy treat. They are great for apple chutneys and homemade applesauce. I even sauté sliced apples in a little butter then add brown sugar and apple cider to used as a topping on frozen yogurt or soy ice cream.
- Extra pumpkin can be frozen for later use in breads, cakes, and pudding. There are good organic pumpkin fillings, too. Stock up after Thanksgiving when they go on sale for use all winter long.

I could go on and on, but this just gives a few ideas. Here are a few recipes I created for a healthy, colorful and tasty meal using some of fall's plentiful harvest foods.

Fresh Tomato Bruschetta

2 cups diced tomatoes
1/2 cup cubed mozzarella
1-2 cloves diced garlic
1/4-1/2 cup chopped basil
Olive oil, salt & pepper

Chop tomatoes and let sit in strainer 1 half hour to remove extra juice.

Remove from strainer, place in bowl and add remaining ingredients.

Drizzle with olive oil, sprinkle with salt & pepper and combine.

Serve with toasted bruschetta slices or crackers

Portobello Mushrooms with Mediterranean Stuffing

(great at Thanksgiving for a main vegetarian entrée or side dish)

4 large (4inch) Portobello mushrooms
1/4 cup each of the following, finely chopped; green pepper, red pepper, carrots, celery, and onion
1 tsp dried Italian seasonings or 1/4 cup of freshly chopped herb mixture
2 garlic cloves, minced
Olive oil or cooking spray

Stuffing

3 cups cubed French bread toasted, your favorite boxed stuffing, or other bread cubes
1/2 cup organic veggie broth
1/2 cup feta cheese, crumbled (use Mediterranean feta if available)
3 tbsp. balsamic vinaigrette
4 tsp parmesan cheese, grated
1/4 tsp black pepper

Preheat oven to 350

Remove stems and scrape gills from mushrooms, chop enough stems to measure 1/4 cup and discard remaining. (or freeze to use in soup stock at later time).

Coat a non-stick skillet with cooking spray or a skillet with 2 tsp. olive oil.

Sauté stems with chopped veggies over medium heat, 5-10 min., or until veggies are tender.

Combine veggie mixture with bread cubes, toss to combine.

Slowly add broth to mixture, tossing to coat and then add feta, tossing gently.

Place mushrooms, cleaned side up, on baking sheet that's coated with cooking spray.

Brush mushrooms evenly with 1 Tbsp. vinaigrette.

Sprinkle evenly, parmesan and black pepper over each mushroom.

Top each with 1/2 cup stuffing mixture.

Bake at 350 for 25 minutes or until mushrooms are tender.

These can be served by placing them on a beautiful bed of salad greens. The following recipe for Autumn Salad would be perfect.

Autumn Salad

Organic mixed lettuce greens (1 bag or 5 cups)
1 sliced or chopped apple or Asian pear
(Granny smith, Fuji, and pink lady are good choices that are more resistant to browning)
Raspberry or Balsamic Vinaigrette (homemade or store bought)
1/2 cup Crumbled goat cheese or blue cheese
1/2 cup Dried cranberries (can use pomegranate seeds, too)
1/3 cup chopped walnuts, almonds, pecans or hazel nuts

Place desired amount of salad dressing in bottom of bowl.

Place other ingredients in bowl, setting aside a small portion of apples, cheese, berries and nuts to garnish salad.

Toss adding additional dressing or toppings as desired.

Quick and Delicious Cobbler

2 cups self rising flour
2 cups sugar
1 large can evaporated milk (12 oz)
1 stick butter
1 pkg or about 2-3 cups, unsweetened frozen fruit, black berries are great

Mix flour and sugar well. Meanwhile, melt butter in casserole dish (2 quarts) in 350 oven
Pour milk into flour mixture and stir well
Add milk mixture to hot butter in pan
Add frozen fruit and top with 1/4 cup sugar
Bake at 350 degrees for 45 minutes until browned and bubbly; and center is cooked.

Pumpkin Treat

(great dessert choice for diabetics)

1 pkg. vanilla instant pudding and pie filling mix (organic varieties and sugar free varieties are available)
or 4 cups pre-made pudding
1 can 12 oz. (fat-free) evaporated milk
1 can organic pumpkin pie filling
1 tsp pumpkin pie spice

Beat together pudding and milk (if using boxed); refrigerate 5 minutes.

Mix in pumpkin and spices; refrigerate at least 10 minutes. Can be made a day in advance.

Place in dessert dishes or cups; mini pre-baked graham cracker crusts, or chocolate dessert cups. You can even layer with crushed vanilla wafers and *real* organic whipped cream.

A time for inward reflection comes with the end of summer. A time when nature begins to change and store it's reserves for the next year. It is also a time to give thanks for the blessings we have in life, the blessings of the autumn harvest, the blessings of gatherings with friends and family, the blessings of rain and the life that it creates.

Take time at the beginning of your yoga practice, just as you might at a meal, to give thanks for the blessings you have in life and the blessings received through the teachings of yoga.

~ Eat well, live well, and love well~