



About the Author:

Katie Pound

Katie is a dietetic intern in the Accelerated Program of Dietetics at the University of Cincinnati. She is currently interning with the WIC program.

Email:
poundke@mail.uc.edu



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2400 Clermont Center Drive
Suite 200
Batavia, OH 45103
513-735-8411

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Summer Time Nutrition

Summer time is the perfect time for healthy eating! During the summer months fresh fruits and vegetables are more readily available than ever. While fruits and veggies are nutritious year-round, they often taste even better and are less expensive when you can get them fresh in-season. Next time you visit the grocery store, be adventurous and choose a new fruit or veggie to include in your next meal!

Gardening: June is the perfect time to start your very own summer garden. Produce such as cabbage, squash, zucchini, cucumber, onion, and even bell peppers and carrots can be grown right at home and can then be used as a staple in every meal. Consuming foods from your very own garden allows for awareness. You know where your produce has been grown, how long it's been growing, what pesticides have and haven't been used, and how fresh it truly is. Gardening can also be a fun and good workout! From planting the seeds, maintaining weeds, moving around soil and even harvesting, gardening can be a peaceful and earthy form of physical activity that allows you to enjoy the sun and also grow a green thumb.

Benefits of consuming seasonal produce: Seasonal produce is fresher, tastes better, costs less, is better for the body, and is more environmentally friendly. When fruits and vegetables are picked for consumption and have been naturally ripened on the vine or the tree and harvested at the right time, it will have much more flavor and nutrition. When transporting crops, they must be harvested early and refrigerated so they don't spoil during transportation (chilling will reduce the flavor). Then when they get to their destination they may need to be heated to artificially ripen the produce before it goes onto the shelves, this greatly reduces the flavor, changes the texture and even alters the taste. In-season produce is also cheaper because farmers are harvesting an abundance of produce due to the crop being in season, so ultimately the cost of the produce will go down. When the produce is locally sourced, because it's in season, traveling expenses and storage are not required, therefore reducing the production costs and consumer cost.

Snacking: Snacking on nutritious foods can help you to stay healthy by keeping your metabolism running efficiently, maintaining your energy levels, and reducing your risk of overeating at mealtime. An ideal snack has two components: protein and a fruit or vegetable. That combination is easy to achieve during summer when there are so many fruits and vegetables available. Snacks such as an apple or celery with peanut butter, carrots or bell peppers with hummus, and even corn salsa and tomato salsa, are all healthy snacks that can be made from seasonal produce and taste great!

What will you do to freshen your pallet this summer? For more information about the WIC Farmers Market Nutrition Program visit <https://ccphohio.org/wic/wic-farmers-market-nutrition-program/> . For more nutrition related information visit <https://ccphohio.org/can/eat-smart/>.