

# To Everything There Is a SEASON

Fresh-picked food is just plain good.

by Melinda Hemmelgarn

Strawberries in January, peaches in March, tomatoes in December. Unless you live in an area with a very long growing season, all of the above violate the laws of eating naturally—in other words, eating in season.

When we eat in rhythm with the seasons, we can appreciate Earth’s natural cycles. Let’s consider the peach. That fuzzy fruit defines summer. Fruits taste best and reach their nutritional peak when picked ripe and eaten shortly after harvest. We can buy imports from Chile all winter long, but out-of-season peaches lack fragrance and the sweet juice that drips down our chins.

## Feasting on Fossil Fuel

Our global food system allow us to eat just about anything we want, any time of year. However choosing foods grown and harvested thousands of miles away takes its toll on

our planet. For example, long-distance trucking to transport food from faraway places requires fossil fuel, adding hidden costs, such as global warming. “Seasonal eating is environmental eating,” explains David Bruce, a Wisconsin organic farmer.

“We are the only species that can protect our planet,” says Kathy Cobb, a consultant to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention’s National Fruit & Vegetable Program. Cobb knows fruits and vegetables help us stay fit and healthy, and you probably do too. But, she says, there are environmental benefits of eating local seasonal produce.

“When we eat food that is planted and grown locally during each of the four seasons, we allow the earth and soil to replenish itself, and reduce harmful effects on the environment caused by transporting food long distances,” Cobb says.



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## Stashing fruits and vegetables in a refrigerator may help reduce nutrient losses. But it's better to get the produce from the plant to your plate pronto.

### Healthy for Earth—and for You

Nourishing ourselves “goes beyond just filling our bellies,” according to registered dietitian Amanda Archibald. She favors seasonal foods because of their overall quality. “If you use the season as your guide, you will always get the best flavor and nutrient content.”

There are many ways fresher is better.

- Fruits and vegetables picked too early can't develop their full flavor and nutrients naturally.
- The extra time needed to get distant foods from the farm to your plate cuts nutrient levels even more.
- Other big nutrient destroyers are heat, light, and exposure to oxygen in the air.

All told, a five- to 10-day road trip might result in a 30 percent to 50 percent loss of some vitamins. Stashing fruits and vegetables in a refrigerator may help reduce nutrient losses. But it's better to get the produce from the plant to your plate pronto.

### Farm Fresh is Best

In Missouri, brothers David and Christopher M. live on Prairie Birthday Farm, where they enjoy fresh, seasonal foods every day. David, 14, knows how much better food can be if it doesn't need to travel long distances. “The types of plants farmers could grow would be picked for taste, not their ability to hold up during shipping,” he explains. David's favorite in-season fruit is watermelon.

Eating food that is in season and grown in its natural setting gives the community something that can't be done the same way anywhere else in the world, says Christopher, 17. He says the most delicious fruit he ever had was pineapple in Hawaii. “It was grown right on the island where I was staying, and it tasted very sweet,” he says. And what was the tastiest vegetable he has ever eaten? “A pod of fresh peas from a vine growing in my mom's garden,” he says.

### Teen Tasters Testify

David and Christopher aren't the only young people who feel that way. “Fresh food tastes better compared to canned and processed,” says Sarah R., 12, of Willow Grove, Pa. Last summer when she visited her cousins in Maine, Sarah enjoyed “squashing up fresh tomatoes” from the garden to make homemade tomato sauce. She has also visited Amish farmland in Lancaster, Pa. There, she ate really good

apples. “They tasted fresher than you get at the supermarket,” Sarah recalls.

Consider the wisdom of the writer and environmentalist Henry David Thoreau. He said, “Live in each season as it passes, breathe the air, drink the drink, taste the fruit.” If you care about climate change, pollution, nutrition, or simply enjoying the best-tasting food on the planet, give seasonal eating a try.

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**Sarah R., left, and her cousin Alexandra S. make homemade sauce with fresh tomatoes.**

## Question: What's for Dinner?

## Answer: What's in Season?

Northerners don't have to give up the sunny taste of fresh fruit in the middle of winter. But anticipating, appreciating, and savoring more of what's fresh and ripe in your geographic backyard gives your plate a sense of time and place. (Availability will vary by region, of course.)



spinach, lettuce, strawberries, asparagus, sugar snap peas, rhubarb, onions



tomatoes, zucchini, summer squash, plums, cucumbers, green beans, peppers, peaches, eggplant, melons, corn, beets, raspberries,



sweet potatoes, cabbage, carrots, kale, pumpkins, winter squash, apples, potatoes, garlic



potatoes, onions, beets, carrots, parsnips, rutabagas, turnips

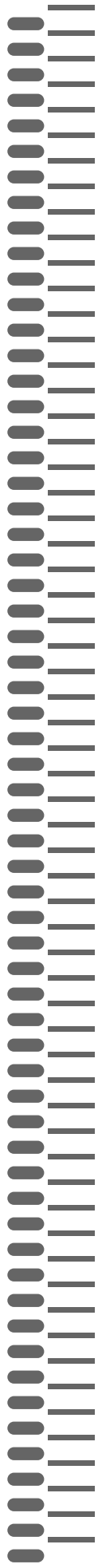


### ALL-SEASON FOODS

meats, dairy, eggs, dry beans, whole grains



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1. What is the main purpose of the article?
- Ⓐ To present arguments about the dangers of global warming
  - Ⓑ To persuade readers to eat more fruits and vegetables
  - Ⓒ To suggest that teens' eating habits are improving
  - Ⓓ To present evidence in favor of eating locally grown foods

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2. The second paragraph ends with this sentence.

*We can buy imports from Chile all winter long, but out-of-season peaches lack fragrance and the sweet juice that drips down our chins.*

Which of the following best describes what the author is doing in this sentence?

- Ⓐ She is alerting readers about a consumer issue.
- Ⓑ She is appealing to her readers' senses of smell and taste.
- Ⓒ She is suggesting a financial reason for readers to buy locally.
- Ⓓ She is encouraging readers to buy imported produce.

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3. On page 3, the article refers to our “**global** food system.” This means our food
- Ⓐ is grown the same way everywhere
  - Ⓑ has a continuous supply
  - Ⓒ comes from different continents
  - Ⓓ is shipped in large quantities

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4. On page 4, Amanda Archibald says that she **favours** seasonal foods. This means that she
- Ⓐ prefers to eat foods when they are in season
  - Ⓑ uses a lot of spices when she cooks her meals
  - Ⓒ chooses fruits and vegetables more often than meat
  - Ⓓ enjoys the food served at holiday parties

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5. According to the article, why is it important to get produce “from the plant to your plate” as quickly as possible?

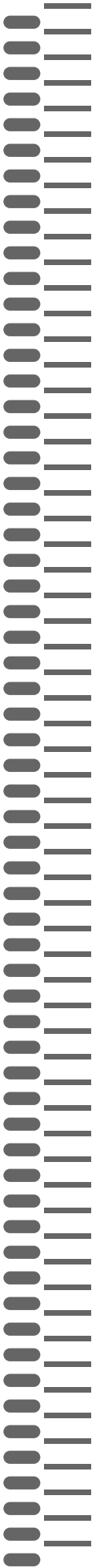
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6. Use your understanding of the article to explain why eating local, seasonal food is important to both individuals and to the environment. Support your answer using specific evidence provided in the article.

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Section X

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7. What are two types of evidence that the author uses in the article to support her argument? Explain why using both types of evidence helps to strengthen the author's argument.

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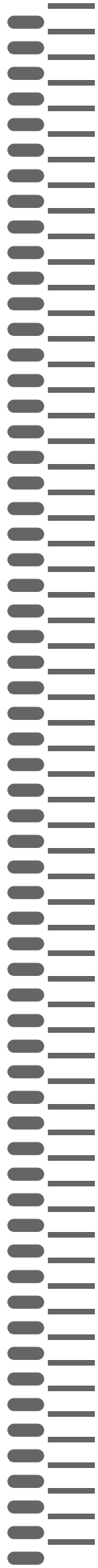
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8. Do you think the quotation by Henry David Thoreau (1817–1862) is an effective way to end the article? Use your understanding of the article to explain why or why not.

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9. Which best describes the main purpose of the chart on page 6 ?

- Ⓐ To encourage people to eat more fruits and vegetables
- Ⓑ To show what northern fruits and vegetables look like
- Ⓒ To provide a guide for eating at different times of the year
- Ⓓ To show what people living in the North prefer to eat

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10. In the chart on page 6, the author refers to giving your plate “a sense of time and place.” What is she suggesting about eating food that is local and seasonal?

- Ⓐ It makes you feel connected to your surroundings.
- Ⓑ It makes you look and feel healthier.
- Ⓒ It allows you to cook meals more quickly and easily.
- Ⓓ It teaches you about different geographical areas.

