

WINTER FOODS AND THEIR PURPOSES

By Peggy Tucker, Pleasant Hill, Missouri

For what purpose, do you suppose, did the Lord instruct us to use foods “in the season thereof” when He knew we would have available foods from climates around the globe in every season of the year? Section 86 of the Doctrine and Covenants, verse 2a, states, “...*All wholesome herbs God hath ordained for the constitution, nature, and use of man, every herb in the season thereof, and every fruit in the season thereof...*” Section 59:4d declares “...*all things which come of the earth, in the season thereof, are made for the benefit and use of man, both to please the eye, and to gladden the heart; yea, for food and for raiment, for taste and for smell, to strengthen the body, and to enliven the soul.*” It is clear He had our best interests at heart.

What are the winter foods in Midwestern America? It was not so very many years ago that most farms had a root cellar. When freezing weather threatened, the last of the garden vegetables were harvested and carefully stored according to their particular need. In the cool damp part of the cellar were carrots, turnips, potatoes, rutabagas, cabbages, parsnips and salsify. These last two were sometimes left in the ground for the frost to sweeten and dug at intervals when the ground was thawed. Pumpkins, sweet potatoes and winter squash rested on the shelves. Apples, pears and sometimes late watermelon also found their place in the winter storage. Green tomatoes were sometimes wrapped and kept in the dark to ripen.

Onions and garlic were well-cured and then hung, ready to season the winter menu, as well as serve as germ killers. Sage, mint, sweet basil, comfrey, red peppers and other herbs were hung to dry from the rafters in the attic, or over the wood stove. These also doubled as flavoring agents as well as healing tea as the need arose.

Dried beans and peas were stored in jars in a cool place, as well as seeds. In the barn were boxes of hulled nuts and in the bins the precious grains that would be staple food for both man and beast.

These are the main foods that have their season in the winter, here in the Midwest. Let's examine their usefulness.

VEGETABLES

Orange and Yellow: winter squash, pumpkins, sweet potatoes, carrots, rutabagas

Main Nutrient: beta carotene, pre-cursor for Vitamin A

Benefits: part of the immune system, needed for health of skin and mucus membrane, night vision, bone growth, and numerous other important metabolic processes.

“An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure.” By keeping the immune system working in good condition we may prevent much illness through the winter months.

1 medium carrot, raw has 793 units of **Vitamin A**; 1 cup cooked, 1,628

1 medium sweet potato, baked in skin: 923

1 cup cubed butternut squash, richest of the squashes, about 709 units

The brighter the color, the higher the beta-carotene content

Green Vegetables: cabbages, Chinese or nappa cabbage, kale, collards, broccoli (until late fall)

Main Nutrients: Beta carotene, Calcium, Vitamin C, folacin

Benefits:

Vitamin A—as described above.

Calcium—cabbage family and Kale are good sources (other dark greens contain oxalic acid which binds the calcium). Important for health of bones, teeth, nerves, blood clotting, muscle action as well as heartbeat, and other metabolic systems.

Vitamin C—needed in greater amounts during fever, infections, hot weather, very cold temperatures. It is an anti-oxidant, which protects food from being oxidized or changed in the body in a harmful way, as the oxidation of oils.

“Vitamin C—because it can be oxidized itself—can protect other substances from this destruction. It is like a bodyguard for oxidizable substances; it stands ready to sacrifice its own life to save theirs.” (Understanding Nutrition, by Whitney & Hamilton, College text)

Chlorophyll—an antiseptic, a stimulant to intestines and kidneys, cleanser

Folacin—a B vitamin, necessary in all rapidly dividing cells, as red blood cells, the villa of the intestines that is restored every three days, also so important in pregnancy. Mostly destroyed with heat, so use some raw.

Kale: 1¼ cup raw kale = 8900 vitamin A units
Vitamin C 120 mg.
Calcium 135 mg.
Potassium 447 mg besides folacin, iron, vitamin E

In addition to the vitamin and mineral content of these green vegetables, they are high water content foods, alkaline in their reaction in digestion. Many of the winter foods are concentrated complex carbohydrate foods, necessary to keep the human body warm in cold weather. But an over abundance of acid-forming foods can overwhelm the immune system. Therefore, there must be some high water foods to balance the acid, alkaline base. Some of these should be used raw as much as possible in order to preserve not only the water, but the enzymes and water soluble vitamins.

Less colorful vegetables: White potatoes, turnips, parsnips

Main benefits: provide extra calories for cold weather and plenty of fiber.

Potatoes are fair sources of protein, vitamin C and folacin if cooked in the

skin.

Turnips are high in vitamin C, especially if used raw, but do keep much of the vitamin when cooked. Their tops are one of the best sources of that vitamin.

Parsnips are left in the ground over the winter to become sweet and tender, containing calcium, iron and vitamin C.

Bulbs: onions and garlic are natural antibiotics

Benefits: Garlic protects from infection, detoxifies the body, strengthens blood vessels, and lowers blood pressure. It aids in the treatment of arteriosclerosis, cancer, circulatory problems, colds, flu, digestive problems, heart disorders, sinusitis, yeast infections, fever and colds. Onions in the raw state have many of the benefits of garlic, only in lesser potency.

FRUIT: In our area, apples and pears are the most natural fruits for winter.

Apples and pears

- ✓ cleansing to the system; high water content; high in fiber, pectin, which lowers cholesterol.
- ✓ contain potassium—critical to the heart beat, helps maintain water balance. Important in nerve and muscle contraction. Plays a part in carbohydrate and protein metabolism.
- ✓ fair sources of vitamin C
- ✓ low glycemic index food and alkaline in their raw state unless sugar is added.

Dried fruits and vegetables

These are of great value when other fruit is not available. Their nutrients are in a concentrated form and may have only lost some of their vitamin C. Because of high sugar content in the fruit, it should be used with wisdom.

GRAINS: winter is the main season for these foods. Grains contribute good complex carbohydrate when used in their natural state. Grain is the highest source of food energy. Also contained in these tiny packages, our Creator packed a marvelous array of vitamins and minerals plus the needed fiber, including the important B vitamins, vitamin E, protein, iron, zinc, phosphorus, potassium, magnesium, trace minerals.

The protein in grain is incomplete, that is they are missing two or more essential amino acids. However, when combined with foods which supply the missing amino acids, they make a good contribution to the protein supply. One of the best ways to do that is to combine them with legumes. The Lord told Ezekiel to make some bread that would sustain him for a period of many days while he enacted out the siege the Lord would put on Israel. He said, *“Take thou also unto thee wheat, and barley, and beans, and lentils, and millet, and fitches, and put them in one vessel, and make thee bread thereof...”* (Ezekiel 4:9) Because of the combination of grains and beans, he would have had both carbohydrate and complete protein.

LEGUMES: This class of food makes possible the good supply of protein without the use of meat. Legumes are short two amino acids that wheat has in abundance, and visa versa. Also their protein can be completed with nuts, dairy foods, or a small amount of meat.

It is believed that legumes and grains constituted the pulse, which Daniel requested to replace the king's meat.

Legumes are rich in protein and B vitamins, but low in fat, high in complex carbohydrates and fiber. Their fiber forms a gel in the intestine that carries cholesterol out of the body.

NUTS: Nuts ripen in the fall and keep well while left in the hull. After shelling, nuts should be protected by freezing or refrigeration. "One easy way to replace saturated fat with unsaturated fat is to use nuts and seeds in place of red meat." (Eat, Drink, and Be Healthy, by Walter C. Willet, M.D., Chairman of the Department of Nutrition at the Harvard School of Public Health)

MEAT

We have a hymn *Great is Thy Faithfulness*. We can trust God's word. When He gave the instruction in Section 86 of the Doctrine and Covenants, the conventional wisdom of the day was that meat was the only way to get protein, and the more the better. It took the scientists 170 years to discover the fallacy of that. The 2005 food pyramid from Harvard School of Public Health echoes the instruction in the Word of Wisdom to "use meat sparingly."

Meat does have its place in cold weather. Meat produces heat in the body when digested, hence one of the reasons it is not appropriate in the summer. The digestion of meat also creates toxin in the system which must be diluted with water before its excretion. During this process, it pulls calcium and other minerals from the body stores and sends them down the drain. This is a good reason for the advice to use it sparingly.

Meat contributes complete protein, iron, some of the B vitamins. Meat adds flavor and helps complete the protein of our winter bean, legume and vegetable dishes such as soup and stir fry.

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Transportation in our day has made possible produce from around the world, so that it is hard to know what is "in season" in our area by walking through a super market. Some of these other things we will take advantage of. However, we have no way of knowing what methods, pesticides, fertilizers, etc., are used in those grown in other cultures. The foods we save and put away in the summer should be used as helpful for variety in the winter. But they cannot provide all of the things the Lord placed in these winter stable foods. Trust Him, ask His guidance in your kitchens. He will bless.

Peggy Tucker is the author of *To Everything There Is a Season—a Natural Food Guide*