

Awesome Autumn Antioxidants Winter Vegetables

Written By Geoff Vogt

It's getting cooler outside. The leaves turn their expected but eye-catching shades of auburn and burgundy. I look on the side of the road, and I see patches of pumpkins. I love the changing of the seasons to fall and winter for so many reasons – football, the holidays, and ... vegetables?

Vegetables harvested in the fall and winter are a unique kind, but so many people don't utilize fall and winter to explore so many great veggies. Everyone makes a big deal about vegetables, but why? Why is it that my mother always told me to eat my veggies? Two of the answers are because of antioxidants such as Vitamin A, C, and E.

Antioxidants are substances that can help protect your body against harmful substances, known as free radicals, which are produced when your body breaks down food or by environmental exposures.¹ Free radicals contribute to the damage of cells and speed up the aging and disease processes.

This is why Vitamin A, C, and E are so important. Vitamin A is a strong antioxidant that protects against mucous membranes and skin, and it is vital for vision functions. There are different forms of Vitamin A, one from animal foods and one from plant foods. Retinol, which

1
<http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/antioxidants.html>

is found in animal foods, is fat soluble, while β -carotene is found in plant foods. Active or preformed Vitamin is found in liver, eggs, milk fortified with Vitamin A, fortified cereals and fish.

Vitamin C, which is also known as Ascorbic Acid or Ascorbate, helps Iron and Calcium to be absorbed. It helps protect skin, lungs, the GI tract, the reproductive tract, and eyes from damage. Vitamin C is sometimes added as a preservative, and it is found in foods like citrus, tomatoes, peppers, berries, and potatoes.²

Vitamin E helps protect your cell's outer barriers from these harmful free radicals. A cell's barrier is its first defense against the harm from free radicals, bacteria, and viruses. A well-protected cell is the first step in the prevention of terrible diseases like cancer, heart disease, and other degenerative diseases.³

Ok, so we get it – Vitamins A, C, and E are important. But what can I do about it? More importantly, what specifically can I eat?

This time of year is great for foods that are rich in antioxidants. There are so many vegetables that are popular



2
<https://www.eatright.org/food/vitamins-and-supplements/types-of-vitamins-and-nutrients/antioxidants-protecting-healthy-cells>

3
<https://www.hsph.harvard.edu/nutritionsource/antioxidants/>

to eat in the fall and winter that are rich in Vitamins A, C, and E. Some of my personal favorites are carrots, pumpkins, and sweet potatoes. Other veggies rich in these antioxidants such as fall and winter are spinach, turnips, beets, winter squash and broccoli.

The great part about the changing of season to fall and winter is that there are so many delicious meals consisting of these veggies harvested in these seasons. One of my favorite holidays of all time is Thanksgiving. As a teenager, if my mother was to come home and say, "Geoff, we are having turnips tonight," I wouldn't be overly excited. But there are so many dishes that make these veggies appealing during the holidays. Stuffing, veggie casseroles, mashed sweet potatoes, and roasted beets are some great options that are worth trying if you haven't considered eating them before. They say, "You are what you eat," so be sure to include vegetables high in antioxidants along with all of your yummy Halloween candy!



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