



Simple, Seasonal Meals

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Introduction

Every fruit or vegetable grown in the home garden reaches its peak at a certain time. The benefits of harvesting and eating produce when at its peak are many. The color, flavor, texture, and nutritional value increase as produce ripens. Eating seasonally also costs less during the normal growing seasons. By choosing fruits and vegetables in season you get all of the benefits — food that tastes good, is good for you, and is reasonably priced.

Lesson Objectives/Outcomes

Participants will

- understand the health benefits of eating locally grown food that is harvested at its peak,
- become familiar with ways to find local produce where they live,
- acquire skills to plan and prepare meals that take advantage of seasonal foods, and
- increase their consumption of vegetables and fruits.

Intended Audiences

- Adult groups of any age, including community groups, family and community education groups
- Youth audiences, 4-H groups, after-school programs
- Youth and adult cooking classes

Preparation

- Read the “Simple Seasonal Meals” fact sheet (MF3217) and review this leader’s guide for suggested activities. Familiarize yourself with the terms and strategies outlined in them.
- Make copies of the evaluation tool on page 2 of this guide.

Presenting the Information

- Give each participant a copy of the fact sheet. Spend about 15 minutes on the first two pages and devote the remaining time to discussing the recipes.
- Prepare (with audience participation) one of the recipes from the current season. If not, due to facilities or time constraints, try to serve samples of an already prepared dish using seasonal ingredients.
- Ask participants to complete the evaluation for the program. Thank them for their participation.



Community Activities

- Set up a booth at a farmers market and demonstrate a recipe using in-season produce.
- As food becomes available from community gardens, many times it is donated to the local food bank. Prepare a simple recipe using in-season produce during their pick-up hours.
- Plan to present this fact sheet to a Women Infant and Children (WIC) audience during the growing season and encourage participants to eat more seasonally.
- Teach a food preservation workshop in your community. This is a positive way to teach others how to preserve the harvest.
- Test pressure canner gauges for accuracy.
- Consider helping with a community or school garden. Helping others learn the benefits of growing their own food is a “win-win” program.

Resources/References

Nancy O'Connor, *Rolling Prairie Cookbook*
Christina Pirello, *Cooking the Whole Foods Way*
Cathleen Hockman-Wirt and Mary Beth Lind, *Simply in Season Cookbook*
USDA Recipes for Healthy Kids
University of Georgia Extension, *So Easy to Preserve*

Websites

<http://growinginlawrence.org/harvestcalendar.html>
<http://localharvest.org/csa/>
<http://search.ams.usda.gov/farmersmarkets/>
American Community Garden Association,
communitygarden.org

Simple Seasonal Meals Evaluation

Thank you for participating in our program. To help us improve this program, we would like to gather your responses to the questions below. Your participation is voluntary, and you do not have to respond to any questions you do not want to answer. This information will only be used for evaluation purposes, and you will not be identified in any way by the information you provide.

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
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After participating in this program I gained knowledge about:

The health benefits from eating locally grown food that is harvested at its peak.					
Ways to find local produce in my community.					
Skill to plan & prepare meals using seasonal foods.					

After participating in this program I plan to:

Make an effort to eat seasonal foods every day.					
Plant a garden or get involved in a community garden.					
Preserve seasonal produce to enjoy later.					
One thing I learned from this program that I did not know before was:					

One thing I wanted to learn from this program or would like to learn in the future is:

Overall, how valuable was this program to you? Not at all Somewhat valuable Valuable Very valuable

Please provide any additional comments you may have.

Gender: Male Female Prefer not to respond

Please indicate your county:

Marital status: Single Single, living w/partner Widowed Married Separated/Divorced
 Prefer not to respond

Thank you for completing this evaluation. We appreciate your feedback.

Please return this form to: _____

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