

## **Vegetation Team's Line-up**

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Autumn is finally here. And with it is a new 'vegetation team' line-up that is chock-full of nutrition for those who will join the fan club. The key recommendation of a recently released global report on diet and cancer prevention is that people should choose a predominately plant-based diet that includes a variety of vegetables, fruits and whole grains. The report concludes that 30-40 percent of cancers are directly linked to dietary choices.

So what makes plant foods so miraculous? One of the factors is that plant foods contain nutrients called phytochemicals. These plant nutrients help prevent the development of tumors and slow down the cancer process. These phytochemicals are also associated with plant pigments or colors. So going for the deep colors and mixing them up helps assure that we are getting the most benefits. Besides an array of phytochemicals, vitamins and minerals, another plant benefit is the fiber they provide.

While many vegetables are available year around, most are at their peak in flavor during a specific season. So what's the line-up for fall? Here are a few examples: acorn and butternut squash, apples, parsnips, pears, pomegranate, pumpkins, sweet potatoes, carrots, red, yellow and orange peppers, Belgian endive, cauliflower, broccoli, cabbage, figs, garlic, mushrooms, grapes, blackberries, plums and swiss chard.

Butternut and acorn squash are high in beta-carotene and potassium. They can be cut up into cubes and steamed or baked with a brush of oil. They are also great in soups, mashed, blended with regular mashed potatoes or added to muffins and casseroles for added nutrition. An easy fix is cutting them in half and baking them with cinnamon, nutmeg (if you can tolerate the spice or aroma) and brown sugar. For people managing their blood sugar ½ cup of acorn squash provides 15 grams of

carbohydrate.  $\frac{1}{2}$  cup of butternut squash provides 10 grams of carbohydrates.

Pumpkins deserve to make more than their annual appearance on doorsteps and porches. The big ones are fine for carving, but the smaller ones (less than six pounds) are sometimes called 'sugar pumpkins' and are good for eating. They can be baked, roasted, sautéed or blended for soups, breads, muffins and pies. Look for the small ones, without blemishes, that can't be scratched with your nail. Or, simply find the 'canned' variety which will do fine for any recipe. For people managing their blood sugar  $\frac{1}{2}$ c of plain pumpkin provides 6 grams of carbohydrates.

More familiar to us all is the sweet potato. Packed with vitamins A, C, beta-carotene, folic acid and potassium, it is a root vegetable. It's great baked, mashed, or pureed for pie or a casserole. They may be helpful for those with a sore mouth from treatment. Being a starchy vegetable they are higher in calories making them good for people with a poor appetite. They can be quickly prepared by placing them into the microwave. First, wash it, prick with a knife, and place on a paper towel. You can use the 'potato' button if you have one or cook on high for 5 minutes or so, depending on the wattage of your microwave oven. After it is cooked, cut it in half, top with a little tub margarine, cinnamon, cloves, or ginger (unless the spices offend you). Add a sprinkle of brown sugar if it helps you enjoy it more. Sweet potatoes are also great cut into strips, brushed with oil, sprinkled with salt and cumin (optional), and baked for 30 minutes in a 400-degree oven. For people managing their blood sugar,  $\frac{1}{2}$  cup of plain baked sweet potato provides 20 grams of carbohydrates.

With so many colorful and flavorful fall vegetables available, it is a good opportunity to try new things if your tastes have changed during treatment. Try some new tricks this fall, you might get a treat you'll love for life!

Here is a quick soup recipe that is perfect for the fall. The onions

provide vitamin C and folacin while the pumpkin provides beta-carotene and vitamin C. For people with difficulty eating enough calories, the low-fat items can be substituted with regular fat items in this recipe or try reduced fat evaporated milk in place of the skim milk.