Winter has arrived!

This issue includes information about staying active, eating seasonally, and tips for reducing sodium and sugar in your diet.

Eat Seasonally

Because produce can be transported long distances, fresh fruits and vegetables are found in grocery stores year-round. To maintain produce variety, the U.S. imports more than half the fruit and almost one-third of vegetables from around the world.¹

Before our food system grew to an international scale, people ate seasonally out of necessity. Seasonal eating is simply eating foods grown in the season you are eating them. While our ancestors ate seasonally out of need, there are reasons why we may want to continue to eat with the seasons.

What produce is in season depends on where you live. What can be grown west of the Cascades will be different from Eastern Washington. The easiest way to know what is in season is to go to your local farm or farmer’s market and see what they are producing. When you purchase from local farmers, you know exactly where your food came from. This helps keep money in your community and supports family farms.

Days to Celebrate!

December
6-12 Handwashing Awareness Week
28 Call a Friend Day

January
10 Cut Your Energy Costs Day
19-25 Healthy Weight Week

February
4 Homemade Soup Day
17 Random Acts of Kindness Day
21 Caregivers Day

¹ This material was funded by USDA’s Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program—SNAP. This institution is an equal opportunity provider. The Washington State Basic Food Program can help provide a healthy diet consistent with the Dietary Guidelines for Americans.
Local foods are not the only in-season foods. Foods that travel from other states, such as citrus fruits, are also considered seasonal produce.

Some seasonal produce available in the winter months include:

- **Cruciferous Vegetables:** Broccoli, Cauliflower, Cabbage, Kale, Radishes, Rutabaga, and Brussels Sprouts
- **Leafy Greens:** Raddichio, Endive, and Escarole
- **Root Vegetables:** Beets, Carrots, Parsnips, Potatoes, Rutabagas, Turnips, and Sweet Potatoes
- **Other Vegetables:** Winter Squash, Pumpkin, Herbs, Celery, Fennel, Leeks, and Onions
- **Citrus Fruits:** Oranges, Clementines, Grapefruit, Kumquats, Lemons, Pomelos, Satsumas, Tangerines and Mandarins
- **Other Fruits:** Pears, Pomegranate, Kiwi, and Persimmons

To find out more about the produce that is available where you live, check out seasonalfoodguide.org.

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**Stay Active**

During the winter months, colder temperatures and less daylight can make it hard for us to be active. This inactivity tends to increase as we age. However, you are never too old to exercise! Seniors who take part in balance and strength exercises can reduce their risk of falling by 33 percent².

**Benefits of participating in at least 30 minutes of physical activity most days:**

- Help prevent or delay the effects of chronic disease.
- Feel better.
- Decrease stress, anxiety, and mild depression.
- Build and maintain healthy bones, muscles, and joints.
- Improve strength.
- Increase balance and reduce the risk of falling.
- Improve sleep.

These exercises are designed to help you build strength, improve balance, and increase flexibility. In addition to at least 30 minutes of moderate-intensity physical activity, include these exercises in your daily program.

*Exercises from USDA's Eat Smart, Live Strong.*

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² Clemson Lindy, Fitarone Singh Maria A, Bundy Anita, Cumming Robert G, Manollaras Kate, O’Loughlin Patricia et al. Integration of balance and strength training into daily life activity to reduce rate of falls in older people (the LiFE study): randomized parallel trial BMJ 2012;
Safe Winter Celebrations

Winter celebrations typically include large gatherings of families and friends, crowded parties, and travel that may put people at increased risk for COVID-19. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) indicates that while celebrating with members of your own household poses a low risk for COVID-19 spread, other in-person gatherings may be riskier depending on location, length of event, and number of guests. As you begin to plan your holiday season, consider your risk of complications from COVID-19, and decide whether it is safe to attend or host a holiday gathering.

Things to consider when planning holiday celebrations:

- The risk for severe illness from COVID-19 increases with age, with older adults at highest risk.
- The higher the level of community transmission where the gathering is being held, the higher the risk of COVID-19 spreading. If staying local, check the Washington State Department of Health’s COVID-19 Data Dashboard for county-specific transmission rates (doh.wa.gov/Emergencies/COVID19/DataDashboard#dashboard). If traveling to, or hosting guests from, another state, the CDC’s COVID Data Tracker (covid.cdc.gov/covid-data-tracker) provides a map of community levels of COVID-19.
- Outdoor activities are safer than indoor activities.

If you do choose to attend or host an event, consider the following CDC recommendations:

- Wear a mask at all times when around people who don’t live in your household to reduce the risk of spreading the virus.
- Maintain a distance of at least 6 feet or more from people you don’t live with.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds or if not available, use a hand sanitizer that contains at least 60 percent alcohol.
- If you or your visitors have symptoms of COVID-19 or have been exposed to someone with COVID-19 in the last 14 days, delay or cancel your visit.

Things you can do in place of in-person celebrations:

- Video chat with others using smartphones, laptops or tablets. You could even have a virtual dinner.
- Cook a traditional family recipe and deliver it to your family or friends in a way that doesn’t involve contact with others.
- Write notes or send cards to your friends and loved ones and ask them to do the same.
- Share a favorite family recipe.

Keep Warm!

Many seniors are on a limited income, which can make paying the heating bill difficult. Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) may be able to help lower-income households pay their heating bill in the winter.

The Washington State Low-Income Weatherization program can help you make improvements to your home, helping to keep cold out and warmth in. If your home does not have enough insulation, they can help weatherize. These improvements can help save energy and keep heating bills down.

To learn more about LIHEAP or the Weatherization Program, call the Washington State Department of Commerce at 360-725-2857, visit their website at commerce.wa.gov or contact your local community action agency.
Looking to reduce sodium?
Here are some tips on how to use herbs and spices in place of salt:

- Instead of salt, substitute herbs and spices with savory flavors like: black pepper, garlic powder, curry powder, cumin, dill seeds, basil, ginger, coriander and onion.
- Skip the salt and flavor your pasta sauces or soups with basil, oregano, parsley and pepper, or use an Italian seasoning blend.
- Use powdered garlic and onion instead of onion and garlic salt. You’ll find you will only need to use half as much.

Looking to reduce or eliminate sugar?
Try using these sweet spices:
- Allspice
- Cloves
- Anise
- Ginger
- Cardamom
- Mace
- Cinnamon
- Nutmeg

Sodium in your diet

Sodium is an essential nutrient that controls blood pressure and is needed to make nerves and muscles work properly, yet too much sodium can cause harm. Our kidney function decreases as we get older, making it harder to remove excess sodium from the body. Because of this, seniors must be careful of how much sodium they consume.

The USDA Dietary guidelines recommend that people 51 and older should consume no more than 2,300 milligrams of sodium per day. This can be a difficult since most processed, pre-made, and canned foods that seniors rely on for convenience are typically high in sodium.

Below are tips to reduce the amount of sodium in your diet:

- Limit the amount of deli meats, pasta and rice mixes, and frozen meals you eat.
- Drain and rinse canned beans and vegetables to lower the sodium levels by 41 percent.
- Choose low-sodium soups.
- Use herbs and spices in place of salt.

Recipe of the Season

Chicken and Rice Stuffed Peppers

**Ingredients:**
- 2 large bell peppers (any color)
- 1 can chicken meat (12.5 oz)
- 1/2 yellow onion, diced
- 1 tomato, diced (about 1 cup)
- 1 tsp. chopped garlic
- 1 cup cooked rice
- 1 cup tomato sauce (may substitute 1/2 cup ketchup with 1/2 cup water)
- 1 cup shredded mozzarella cheese
- 1 tbsp. cooking oil

**Directions:**
1. Preheat oven to 375°F.
2. In a medium-size frying pan on medium-high heat, add chopped garlic and onions. Cook for 3 minutes until soft.
3. Add chicken, diced tomato, Italian seasoning and tomato sauce. Bring mixture to a simmer and cook for 3 minutes.
4. Add cooked rice and stir until mixture is well combined.
5. Set aside.
6. Slice bell pepper in half from top to bottom. Remove the seeds and white membrane then arrange cut side up in baking dish.
7. Pour a bit of water into pan with the peppers – just enough to barely cover bottom of pan (this helps the peppers become tender).
8. Cover with aluminum foil and bake for 25 minutes.
9. Remove cover and bake for additional 20 minutes until peppers are tender and the cheese is melted.

**Nutrition Facts**

- **Calories:** 402
- **Total Fat:** 12.6g (16% DV)
- **Saturated Fat:** 3g (15% DV)
- **Trans Fat:** 0g
- **Cholesterol:** 43mg (14% DV)
- **Sodium:** 474mg (21% DV)
- **Total Carbohydrate:** 45.2g (16% DV)
- **Dietary Fiber:** 4g (14% DV)
- **Sugars:** 5g
- **Protein:** 27g
- **Vitamin D:** 4% DV
- **Calcium:** 52mg
- **Iron:** 3mg (15% DV)
- **Potassium:** 613mg (13% DV)
- **Vitamin A:** 8% DV
- **Vitamin C:** 0% DV

*The % Daily Value (DV) tells you how much a nutrient in a serving of food contributes to a daily diet. 2,000 calories a day is used for general nutrition advice.

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3 Henneman, A. Add a Little Spice (& Herbs) to Your Life! Retrieved from food.unl.edu/documents/Spice%26HerbsHandout08.pdf