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AUGUST 2011

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We turned to nutrition expert and wellness coach, Jackie Keller, founding director of L.A.-based NutriFit gourmet healthy food company (nutrifitonline.com), to pick out some of her favorite summer-fresh fare.

Northeast

Beans

Summer Staple: They're a meatless, backyard-barbecue favorite.

Health Pros: Folate, fiber, protein and iron; low in fat.

Cooking Tips: Combine with veggies (jicama, corn or summer squash). Dress with olive oil (helps the body absorb fat-soluble vitamins found in beans).

Corn

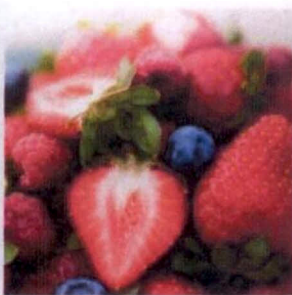
Summer Staple: At its peak during the summer.

Health Pros: Fiber, folate, vitamins B1, B5 and C, phosphorus and manganese.

Cooking Tips: Don't overcook or swath in butter or salt. Steam for 5 minutes.



Midwest



Leafy Greens

Summer Staple: Spinach, kale, collard and mustard greens are at their peak.

Health Pros: Iron, calcium, potassium, magnesium and vitamins K, C, E.

Cooking Tips: Get the most nutrients with fresh or pan-wilted greens.

Berries

Summer Staple: Locally grown so they're sweet as candy.

Health Pros: Phytochemicals, vitamins A, C and E, folate, potassium and fiber.

Cooking Tips: Great in salads, smoothies or desserts.

Westcoast

Cherries

Summer Staple: Easy to eat and require little prep.

Health Pros: Beta carotene (19 times more than blueberries or strawberries), vitamin C, potassium, magnesium, iron, fiber and folate.

Cooking Tips: Enjoy them fresh or dried in salads, muffins or pancakes.

Avocado

Summer Staple: The absorption of its vitamins and minerals is enhanced when the fruit is paired with other foods.

Health Pros: Folate and potassium; monounsaturated fat.

Cooking Tips: Pair ½ cup avocado with spinach to absorb four times more lutein.



Southeast

Watermelon

Summer Staple: More than 50 varieties in existence—all of them about 92 percent water.

Health Pros: Vitamins B1 and B6, magnesium, potassium and lycopene.

Cooking Tips: Roast the seeds, which contain healthy fat.

Tomatoes

Summer Staple: The third most-popular vegetable eaten by Americans.

Health Pros: Best source of cancer-fighting lycopene when cooked.

Cooking Tips: Broil halves and top with whole-wheat breadcrumbs mixed with parsley, parmesan cheese and fresh basil.