



CHALLENGE:

Include the best seasonal fruit summer has to offer in your diet each day.

Fruits and vegetables are our best sources of vitamins, antioxidants, and unique phytonutrients. Choosing fruit that is in season, freshly harvested, and ripe will dramatically increase its nutritional value. This month, shelve your standby snacks in favor of these seasonal fruits.

Apricots: Available from May through September, apricots are an Asian fruit, first brought to Europe by the Greeks who called them “golden eggs of the sun.” Like most orange hued plants, apricots are excellent sources of vitamin A and carotenes. Select fruits with a uniform golden-orange color and rich aroma. Ripened apricots are very delicate and should be handled with care. Store ripe apricots in the refrigerator to keep them fresh longer. Tip: Store them in an egg crate where they won’t get bruised.

Blackberries: Blackberries are an excellent source of antioxidants, relieving the body of oxidative stress. Composed of many individual “drupelets”, each like a small berry with one seed, each drupelet contributes extra skin, seeds, and pectin, making them one of the highest fiber content plants in the world. Blackberries are also a great source of Ellagic acid, an antioxidant shown to protect the skin from damage from ultraviolet light – how convenient that they ripen during the summer months! Select blackberries that have a deep color and avoid those with hulls still attached (a sign of premature picking). They don’t ripen after packaging, so eat them right away as they only last about 2-3 days. They are best stored unwashed and arranged in a single layer on a plate in the refrigerator.

Blueberries: These little nutrient powerhouses contain the most antioxidants of any fruit and are good sources of fiber and vitamin C. Though their peak season is July, blueberries start appearing in May, in time to usher in the first days of summer. Look for berries that are vibrantly colored, taut, and shiny. Use blueberries in salads, desserts, and as part of a delicious breakfast or snack. Stock your freezer with bags of unwashed blueberries so you can enjoy them throughout the year.

Boysenberries: Boysenberries are less commonly found in your local grocery store, so if you come across them at your farmers market, be sure to pick up a basket! They are a cross between blackberries and raspberries with a dark purple color and you should see them appearing in late June. Each different fruit has a unique nutritional profile, and boysenberries are no different. As part of the berry family they are also high in antioxidants and fiber, but boysenberries specifically are an excellent source of folate. Like raspberries and blackberries, boysenberries are very delicate and should be handled with care and eaten quickly. Don't wash them under running water, rather dip them in a bowl of water and lay flat to dry.

Cantaloupe: Another orange fruit high in vitamin A and carotenes, cantaloupe is also a great source of vitamin C and potassium. Available from May through September, this juicy summer fruit is delicious on its own and its sweetness pairs well with salty meats, like prosciutto, and fresh herbs, like mint or rosemary. Choose cantaloupes that feel heavy for their size with a spongy, sweet-smelling stem.

Cherries: Like many brightly-colored foods, cherries are considered a "superfood" because of their high antioxidant content. Cherries are one of the few foods that contain melatonin, an antioxidant that helps regulate heart rhythms and the body's sleep cycle. Look for cherries that are firm with a deep, rich color and bright green stem. Store them in the refrigerator to keep them fresh.

Nectarines: Originating in Asia, nectarines are close relatives of the peach. The sweetest nectarines are a product of a very cold winter season, followed by warm weather during the spring. Nectarines are a good source of certain B vitamins as well as minerals and electrolytes like potassium, iron, zinc, copper, and phosphorous. Select ripe nectarines as those harvested prematurely will not have the same flavor as those picked ripe.

Peaches: Nothing says summer more than stone fruit, and peaches are the jewels in summer's crown. They start ripening in late spring, but may not reach their peak sweetness until mid-summer. A good source of fiber, vitamins, and minerals, the early Chinese would use the pit for medicine and call the fruit the "longevity peach" as it was believed to extend life. Choose peaches with a sweet fragrance and are soft, but not mushy. Firmer peaches should be left on the counter to ripen, and ripe peaches should be stored in the fridge and eaten as soon as possible.

Plums: Known for their antioxidant content and ability to increase iron absorption, plums are another sweet summer treat that begin to appear in May. Look for plums that have a rich color and feel slightly soft to the touch. Consume plums at their ripest for highest antioxidant content and avoid buying plums that are under ripe as they probably won't develop a good taste and texture profile.

Raspberries: Filled with antioxidants, fiber, and just the right mix of tart and sweet, it's easy to see why raspberries are one of the most popular berries in the world. Recent research has found that organic raspberries have significantly higher antioxidant capacity than non-organic raspberries. To further increase your antioxidant benefit, select raspberries that are fully ripe. Choose berries that are firm, plump, and deep in color, avoiding those that are soft, mushy, or moldy. They are highly perishable, so store unwashed berries in a single layer in your refrigerator and enjoy within 1-2 days.

Strawberries: A common fruit, strawberries are prized for their sweet taste, but also provide supportive nutrients for the cardiovascular system, blood sugar balance, and cancer prevention. Since strawberries don't ripen further once picked, select berries that are plump and deep red with attached caps. They're very perishable so be sure to enjoy them within a few days of purchase.

Watermelon: Though classified in the melon family, watermelon belongs to a different genus other than melons. Alongside tomatoes, watermelon is an excellent source of lycopene, a phytonutrient that's especially important for cardiovascular health. Recent studies have confirmed the nutritional importance of allowing a watermelon to fully ripen. To choose a ripe watermelon, look for one that feels heavy for its size as a watermelon's water content will increase as it ripens. Look for the "ground spot" where the melon was resting on the ground. This spot should turn from white/green to yellow upon ripening. The side opposite the ground spot, where the melon was exposed to the sun, should be slightly dull in color. Uncut watermelons should be stored in a cool place, but not as cold as the refrigerator.

Name_____

Month Completed_____

Harker School Wellness Program / Summer Seasonal Fruit Challenge

Focus on eating seasonal fresh fruit for four weeks, and aim for at least 2 servings a day. List the 2 servings of fruit you eat each day on the log below. Submit completed log to HR to earn 10 wellness points. (100 points max in this category)

Week 1

Day 1 _____
Day 2 _____
Day 3 _____
Day 4 _____
Day 5 _____
Day 6 _____
Day 7 _____

Week 2

Day 8 _____
Day 9 _____
Day 10 _____
Day 11 _____
Day 12 _____
Day 13 _____
Day 14 _____

Week 3

Day 15 _____
Day 16 _____
Day 17 _____
Day 18 _____
Day 19 _____
Day 20 _____
Day 21 _____

Week 4

Day 22 _____
Day 23 _____
Day 24 _____
Day 25 _____
Day 26 _____
Day 27 _____
Day 28 _____

Signature_____ Date_____

I, the employee named above, guarantee that the information contained in this verification is true and accurate and I understand that HR may verify any forms submitted for the purpose of obtaining a wellness discount. I understand that any inaccurate and/or false statements on this form may lead to the loss of all or a portion of my wellness discount.

To receive credit, this form must be submitted to HR within 30 days of completion and no later than December 5, 2019.