Farm Fresh Produce

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-Eating healthy is important, but do we sometimes forget the deliciousness factor? There is nothing like biting into fresh summer produce.

Unfortunately the word “healthy” gets a bad rap, especially when it comes to food. People often focus on the boring and bland foods instead of the myriad of foods that happen to fall into the “healthy” category. Nothing beats a sweet, plump strawberry or a red juicy tomato. Both are extremely delicious and nutritious!

-Which seasonal produce do you recommend sampling? What are basic nutritional benefits and fun ways to use them? Sample everything! Farmer’s markets are a great place to try new things, especially if you have a fear of commitment. Most farmers are happy to give you a taste of what they’ve grown and can even tell you how to use or cook it. Farmers markets are also a great way to see what’s in season in your area.

-Do you have any tips for finding the best farmers' market food? E.g. Stone fruit should smell sweet; don't be afraid of overripe fruit; buy in bulk to save $; organic produce may not appear cookie cutter as it does in stores - and that's natural!

Ask the farmers at the market what is fresh and what is at its peak. They want to make lifetime customers, so they will steer you in the right direction every time. If you are unsure of which tomato to choose, just ask. You’ll be amazed at the friends you make at the market and the amount of useful information they will share with you.

A few tips that I keep in my back pocket…

Cucumbers and summer squash – should be firm and not show any wrinkles on the flesh. Any soft spots or bruises may be a sign that they are old.

Tomatoes – should be heavy for their size and firm, but not hard. A good tomato will have a strong tomato scent.

Melons – should also be heavy for their size. Stay away from moldy, bruised or dented melons.

Cantaloupe and honeydew – sniff the end, it should smell like cantaloupe or honeydew, a super sweet scent and the rind should be more orange in color than green (for cantaloupe) and a pale yellow or cream color (for honeydew).

-Herbs, fruit, and cukes add pizzazz and electrolytes to plain water. Should we try it?

Absolutely try it! If you find it challenging to get enough water each day, this is a sure way to make it easier. Try muddling fresh herbs into a giant pitcher and store in the fridge to keep it cold. Mint is a great herb to try first. If you have a more adventurous palate, try mixing herbs and fruits together. Another good idea is to add pureed fruits and herbs to ice. Just blend up some strawberries and basil, mix with a little water and pour into ice cube trays! Add those cubes to sparkling water and it won’t feel like a chore staying hydrated anymore!

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