



Spring Toward a Healthier Diet

21 Recipes Full of the Season's Freshest Ingredients



We enjoy unlimited access to any food any time of the year. Although it's nice to have watermelon in February and asparagus in August, many people don't even know that foods have a season, let alone what foods are in season at any given time of year.

We selected seven ingredients that are readily available in spring (which means they're fresh, flavorful, and affordable) and chose user-submitted SparkRecipes that highlight those ingredients.



Artichokes



Chicken with Artichokes and Roasted Red Peppers

Prep time: 5 minutes Cooking Time: 15 minutes

Ingredients:

16 oz chicken breasts
1/2 c chopped onions
1 T chopped garlic (about 2 cloves)
1 c chicken low-sodium chicken broth
1 c artichokes (fresh, frozen or canned), chopped

1 c roasted red peppers, sliced
1 c tomatoes, chopped
1/2 t crushed red pepper flakes
2 T flour whisked into about 1/4 c tap water
for sauce thickening salt and pepper to taste

Instructions:

Season chicken with salt, pepper and garlic and place on indoor grill. Cook until juices run clear. In large skillet (coated with nonstick cooking spray) set over medium-high heat, sauté onions and garlic. Once the onions are clear, add the chicken broth and let it reduce a bit. After about five minutes, add the artichokes and roasted red peppers. Remove chicken from the grill and slice into strips. Add to skillet. Add tomatoes and crushed red pepper flakes and let simmer for five minutes. If sauce is too runny, add the flour and water mixture to thicken. We served ours over a half-cup of couscous (calories not included)!

Makes 4 servings (4 oz chicken, plus about 3/4 c vegetables each)

Nutritional Info

Calories: 207.3

Total Fat: 2.2 g
Cholesterol: 65.7 mg
Sodium: 605.1 mg
Total Carbs: 16.7 g
Dietary Fiber: 4.3 g
Protein: 30.0 g

Roasted Fish with Artichokes and Cherry Tomatoes

Prep time: 10 minutes Cooking Time: 45 minutes

Ingredients:

3 medium red onions, cut into wedges
1/4 c olive oil
14-oz package of frozen artichoke hearts, thawed
1 c small cherry tomatoes
1/4 c finely chopped parsley

1 t grated orange zest
juice from 1 orange
2 cloves garlic, minced
4 (4-oz) tilapia fillets

Instructions:

Preheat oven to 400 degrees Fahrenheit.
In a glass baking dish, combine onions and oil. Spread in a thin, even layer. Roast for about 35 minutes or until onions are very soft. Remove dish from oven and stir in the artichokes and tomatoes. Increase oven to 450 degrees.
In a bowl, mix parsley, orange zest, juice and garlic. Push vegetables to one side of dish, add tilapia fillets and then spoon vegetables over them. Sprinkle with parsley and orange mixture. Return baking dish to oven and roast until the fish flakes easily (between 5 to 10 minutes depending on the thickness of the fillets).

Makes 4 servings (1 fillet and about 1 c of vegetables each).

Nutritional Info

Calories: 295.6

Total Fat: 15.1 g
Cholesterol: 55.0 mg
Sodium: 78.1 mg
Total Carbs: 17.3 g
Dietary Fiber: 5.1 g
Protein: 24.4 g

World's Best Spinach and Artichoke Dip

Prep time: 10 minutes Cooking Time: 5 minutes

Ingredients:

1 package (10 oz) frozen spinach
1 bag (14 oz) frozen artichokes
16 oz light cream cheese
1 T lemon juice
1 small onion, minced
3 cloves garlic, minced

1/3 c parmesan cheese
1/2 t red-pepper flakes
1/2 t oregano
salt, pepper to taste
nonstick cooking spray
(Optional garnishes: minced red bell pepper or chopped tomatoes)

Instructions:

Spray a medium pot with nonstick cooking spray. Add garlic and onions and cook over medium heat until they're translucent, about five minutes. Put thawed and drained frozen spinach* in food processor or blender and pulse a few times to chop. Add artichokes and pulse a few more times. The mixture should be chunky. Add spinach and artichokes to pot, along with cream cheese, oregano, red pepper flakes and lemon juice. Heat until bubbly, then add parmesan cheese and salt and pepper to taste. Serve immediately. Garnish with chopped red bell pepper or chopped tomatoes. (Calories not included.)

Makes 20 servings (2 T each). Serve with vegetables or baked chips.

* Don't worry about getting the spinach completely dry. The extra moisture will help thin the dip.

Nutritional Info

Calories: 65.9

Total Fat: 4.2 g
Cholesterol: 13.3 mg
Sodium: 192.3 mg
Total Carbs: 3.8 g
Dietary Fiber: 0.9 g
Protein: 3.8 g



Asparagus



Asparagus Frittata with Mozzarella Cheese and Potatoes

Prep time: 5 minutes Cooking Time: 15 minutes

Ingredients:

1 large baking potato, peeled and thinly sliced
1 pound asparagus, trimmed and cut into 1/2" pieces
4 large eggs
4 egg whites
1/2 c skim milk
4 T shredded low-fat mozzarella cheese, divided
1/2 t salt
1/4 t baking powder
1 medium onion, chopped

Instructions:

Preheat oven to 500 degrees Fahrenheit.
Place the potato slices in a saucepan and add enough water to cover. Cover the saucepan, and bring to a boil over high heat; boil for five minutes. Add the asparagus and cook two minutes longer. Drain and set aside. Combine the whole eggs, egg whites, milk, 3 tablespoons of cheese, salt and baking powder in a bowl. Mix in the potato and asparagus. Spray an ovenproof skillet with non-stick spray set over medium heat. Add onion and cook, stirring occasionally for about two minutes. Add egg mixture, reduce heat to medium. Cover and cook until almost set. Sprinkle with remaining cheese and transfer to oven. Bake until frittata is cooked through and the cheese has browned, about five minutes. Cut into four wedges and serve.
Makes 4 servings (1/4 of the frittata)

Nutritional Info

Calories: 176.2

Total Fat: 3.8 g
Cholesterol: 62.0 mg
Sodium: 428.4 mg
Total Carbs: 23.5 g
Dietary Fiber: 3.4 g
Protein: 12.6 g

Roasted Asparagus with Garlic

Prep time: 5 minutes Cooking Time: 10 minutes

Ingredients:

1 lb fresh asparagus (medium width)
2 t olive oil
2 garlic cloves, minced
Salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste
Lemon wedges, as garnish

Instructions:

Preheat oven to 500 degrees Fahrenheit. Rinse asparagus and break off tough ends. Place asparagus in a shallow roasting pan, and coat with oil. Sprinkle with garlic and salt and pepper to taste. Roast uncovered for 6-8 minutes (depending on width of spears), shaking pan occasionally to turn asparagus. Serve with lemon wedges.
Makes 4 servings (approximately 4 medium spears each)

Nutritional Info

Calories: 48.2

Total Fat: 2.5 g
Cholesterol: 0.0 mg
Sodium: 2.5 mg
Total Carbs: 5.6 g
Dietary Fiber: 2.4 g
Protein: 2.7 g

Savory Asparagus Chicken Stir Fry

Prep time: 5 minutes Cooking Time: 30 minutes

Ingredients:

4-5 skinless, boneless chicken breasts (about 1.5 lbs total)
2 medium onions (about 2 cups chopped)
1 lb asparagus, cut in 1" pieces
5 oz baby carrots, chopped
(cut each baby carrot into 3 pieces)
1 clove garlic, smashed (or 1 t garlic puree)
1-2 T dried summer savory or dried thyme
1 1/2 t salt
1 large red sweet pepper
4 medium yellow flesh potatoes,
washed and diced (leave skins on potatoes)

Instructions:

Cut the chicken breasts into bite-size squares and sauté them over medium heat, stirring occasionally. Cover. While the chicken breasts are cooking, cut the vegetables. Once the chicken is white on the outside (it's OK if the insides are still pink), add the carrots and potatoes and stir. Add garlic, salt, and the summer savory. Stir, cover and simmer over medium-low heat for 10 minutes.

Add the remaining vegetables to the pan, stir and cover. Simmer over medium-low heat until the vegetables are cooked.

Makes about 6 servings (2 1/2 c each)

Nutritional Info

Calories: 293.1

Total Fat: 2.0 g
Cholesterol: 65.7 mg
Sodium: 288.8 mg
Total Carbs: 37.8 g
Dietary Fiber: 7.3 g
Protein: 31.9 g



Avocados



Grapefruit Avocado Salad

Prep time: 5 minutes

Ingredients:

2 ruby red grapefruits
2 T of olive oil
3/4 t salt
1 avocado, peeled, cored, and diced

1/4 c red onion, thinly sliced
6 c of romaine lettuce, spinach or arugula, chopped

Nutritional Info

Calories: 232.3

Total Fat: 18.6 g
Cholesterol: 0.0 mg
Sodium: 446.6 mg
Total Carbs: 16.6 g
Dietary Fiber: 6.4 g
Protein: 4.1 g

Instructions:

Cut grapefruit into segments over a bowl to catch the juice. Keep the juice in the bowl. Whisk olive oil and salt into the reserved grapefruit juice. Set aside. Divide lettuce in bowls, then top with avocado, grapefruit segments, and onion. Toss lightly and add on the dressing.

Makes 4 salads.

Bean, Corn, and Avocado Salad

Prep time: 5 minutes

Ingredients:

15-oz can black beans, drained and rinsed
15-oz can corn, drained and rinsed
1 medium tomato, chopped
1/2 c onion, chopped

1 avocado, chopped
2 oz lime juice (juice of one lime)
1 t olive oil
1/4 c fresh cilantro, finely chopped

Nutritional Info

Calories: 183.5

Total Fat: 6.6 g
Cholesterol: 0.0 mg
Sodium: 79.3 mg
Total Carbs: 27.1 g
Dietary Fiber: 9.0 g
Protein: 7.5 g

Instructions:

Drain beans and corn; mix. Add finely chopped onion, tomato and avocado cubes. Season with lime juice, olive oil and fresh cilantro. Mix well, and sprinkle salt and pepper to taste.

Makes 6 servings (1 1/2 c each)

Creamy Avocado Dressing

Prep time: 5 minutes

Ingredients:

1 clove garlic
2 t honey
2 T cilantro or basil, chopped
1 avocado, peeled and pitted

3/4 c skim milk (or rice/soy milk)
3 T lime juice (juice of 1 lime)
2 T apple cider vinegar

Nutritional Info

Calories: 38.2

Total Fat: 2.6 g
Cholesterol: 1.2 mg
Sodium: 8.8 mg
Total Carbs: 3.6 g
Dietary Fiber: 1.0 g
Protein: 0.8 g

Instructions:

Puree all ingredients in a food processor or blender. If you want it a thinner consistency, you can add more milk.

Makes about 12 servings (2 T each)



Carrots



Sweet and Tangy Glazed Carrots

Prep time: 5 minutes Cooking Time: 15 minutes

Ingredients:

1 2-pound bag baby carrots
(2 pound bag or 4 cups of regular carrots, chopped)
3T olive oil

2 T brown sugar
3 T balsamic vinegar

Nutritional Info

Calories: 105.6

Total Fat: 5.3 g
Cholesterol: 0.0 mg
Sodium: 58.4 mg
Total Carbs: 14.0 g
Dietary Fiber: 2.5 g
Protein: 1.3 g

Instructions:

Heat olive oil in large skillet over medium high heat. Add carrots and sauté for 10 minutes or until carrots are as tender as you like. Add brown sugar and balsamic vinegar, cook another two minutes and serve.

Makes 8 half-cup servings (1/2 c each).

Carrot Broccoli Soup

Prep time: 15 minutes Cooking Time: 20 minutes

Ingredients:

1 medium onion, chopped
2 medium carrots, chopped
2 celery ribs, chopped
1 T butter
3 c fresh broccoli florets

3 c skim milk, divided
3/4 t salt
1/2 t dried thyme
1/8 t pepper
3 T all-purpose flour

Nutritional Info

Calories: 164.7

Total Fat: 3.9 g
Cholesterol: 12.1 mg
Sodium: 633.2 mg
Total Carbs: 24.1 g
Dietary Fiber: 3.8 g
Protein: 10.2 g

Instructions:

In a large saucepan coated with cooking spray, cook the onion, carrots and celery in butter for 3 minutes. Add broccoli; cook 3 minutes longer. Stir in 2-3/4 cups milk, salt, thyme and pepper. Bring to a boil. Reduce heat; cover and simmer for 5-10 minutes or until vegetables are tender. Combine the flour and remaining milk until smooth; gradually stir into soup. Bring to a boil; cook 2 minutes longer or until thickened.

Makes 4 servings (about 1 1/2 c each)

Pan-Seared Green Beans and Carrots

Prep time: 5 minutes Cooking Time: 15 minutes

Ingredients:

1 c baby carrots, chopped in half
1 c frozen green beans
1 clove fresh garlic, crushed
2 T extra virgin olive oil

1 t crushed black pepper
Dash of salt (optional)

Nutritional Info

Calories: 84.9

Total Fat: 7.2 g
Cholesterol: 0.0 mg
Sodium: 24.3 mg
Total Carbs: 5.7 g
Dietary Fiber: 2.0 g
Protein: 0.9 g

Instructions:

Place olive oil in a medium-sized skillet, then add the garlic and pepper and turn burner to low heat. Add green beans and carrots. Turn the heat up to medium-high. Shake the pan to coat all the vegetables with the seasoned olive oil mixture. Once the vegetables soften, cover the pan, and allow the vegetables to caramelize. Keep your eye on the dish, as you don't want them to burn. The vegetables are ready when the green beans are starting to brown.

Makes 4 servings (1/2 c each)



New Potatoes



Roasted Chicken and New Potatoes

Prep time: 5 minutes Cooking Time: 50 minutes

Ingredients:

2 lbs chicken (thighs and legs), skin removed
2 lbs small red potatoes, washed and quartered
2 T chopped fresh basil or 2 t dried basil leaves
1 T chopped fresh thyme or 1/2 t dried thyme leaves

3 t olive or vegetable oil
1 t garlic salt

Nutritional Info

Calories: 228.1

Total Fat: 8.6 g
Cholesterol: 70.6 mg
Sodium: 222.1 mg
Total Carbs: 18.2 g
Dietary Fiber: 2.1 g
Protein: 18.9 g

Instructions:

Heat oven to 375 degrees Fahrenheit.
Place chicken and potatoes in ungreased baking dish. Mix remaining ingredients; sprinkle or brush over chicken and potatoes.
Cover and bake 30 minutes; turn chicken and potatoes. Bake uncovered 20 to 30 minutes longer or until juice of chicken is no longer pink when centers of thickest pieces are cut.

Makes 8 servings (4 oz each chicken and potatoes)

Pesto Roasted Red Potatoes

Prep time: 10 minutes Cooking Time: 30 minutes

Ingredients:

6 medium red potatoes, quartered then chopped in half
2 T pesto
1 T olive oil
1 T minced garlic

1 T dried basil
dash kosher salt

Nutritional Info

Calories: 191.2

Total Fat: 2.7 g
Cholesterol: 0.1 mg
Sodium: 43.2 mg
Total Carbs: 38.3 g
Dietary Fiber: 4.8 g
Protein: 4.5 g

Instructions:

Preheat oven to 450 degrees Fahrenheit.
Combine all ingredients in a large bowl.
Spray a large baking sheet with nonstick cooking spray, and spread potatoes in a single layer. Roast in the oven for about 25-40 minutes, depending on your oven, and how crispy you like them. Stir potatoes every 15 minutes or so.

Makes 6 servings (8 potato pieces each)

Cottage Potatoes

Prep time: 15 minutes Cooking Time: 20 minutes

Ingredients:

3 russet potatoes, washed and cubed
1 medium onion, diced
1 c nonfat cottage cheese

salt and pepper to taste

Nutritional Info

Calories: 109.5

Total Fat: 0.2 g
Cholesterol: 1.7 mg
Sodium: 10.1 mg
Total Carbs: 20.6 g
Dietary Fiber: 2.7 g
Protein: 6.5 g

Instructions:

Preheat oven to 350 degrees Fahrenheit. Boil potatoes in pot of water until tender. Drain. Mash them up and stir in the onion and cottage cheese. Season with salt and pepper. Place in baking dish, spritzed with nonstick cooking spray. Bake for 20 minutes.

Makes 6 servings (3/4 c each)



Spinach



Low-Fat Spinach and Whole-Wheat Lasagna Rolls

Prep time: 5 minutes Cooking Time: 50 minutes

Ingredients:

10 oz package frozen chopped spinach
15 oz package low-fat ricotta cheese
1/2 c reduced fat grated parmesan cheese
1 beaten egg
1/8 t ground nutmeg
8 whole-wheat lasagna noodles, cooked and drained
1/2 c chopped onion

1/2 c chopped green bell pepper
2 c sliced fresh mushrooms
2 cloves garlic, minced
14 oz can diced tomatoes
1/2 teaspoon t dried basil, crushed
8 oz can tomato sauce

Nutritional Info

Calories: 219.7

Total Fat: 5.6 g
Cholesterol: 47.2 mg
Sodium: 425.2 mg
Total Carbs: 34.3 g
Dietary Fiber: 5.3 g
Protein: 12.7 g

Instructions:

Preheat oven to 375 degrees. Spray a 2-quart rectangular baking dish with cooking spray; set aside.

For filling, stir together the spinach, ricotta, parmesan cheese, egg and nutmeg in a bowl. Spread about 1/3 cup of the filling on each noodle. Roll up, jelly-roll style, beginning at a short end. Place rolls, seam sides down, in prepared dish. Cover with foil. Bake rolls for about 30 minutes or until heated through. Meanwhile, to make the sauce spray a 2-quart saucepan with cooking spray.

Place over medium heat. Add onion, bell pepper, mushrooms and garlic. Cook until vegetables are tender. Stir in undrained tomatoes (including juice), basil and tomato sauce. Season to taste with salt and pepper. Bring to boil; reduce heat. Simmer, uncovered, for 5 to 10 minutes or until desired consistency. Serve sauce over lasagna rolls.

Makes 8 servings.

Pasta with Spinach, Tomatoes and Feta

Prep time: 10 minutes Cooking Time: 10 minutes

Ingredients:

8 oz pasta
8 oz crumbled feta*
16 oz grape tomatoes

3 c fresh spinach
1/4 t pepper

Nutritional Info

Calories: 174.2

Total Fat: 0.7 g
Cholesterol: 18.8 mg
Sodium: 1,066.7 mg
Total Carbs: 27.3 g
Dietary Fiber: 0.6 g
Protein: 15.6 g

Instructions:

Cook pasta according to package directions. Place the cheese in a large bowl; top with spinach and tomatoes. Before draining the pasta, take 1/4 cup cooking water from the pot and pour over the vegetables and cheese. Drain pasta, then toss with the spinach and cheese. Sprinkle with salt and pepper to taste. *Use low-sodium feta if you're watching your salt intake.

Makes 4 servings (2 oz pasta plus heaping 1/2 c vegetables)

Spinach Mushroom Quiche

Prep time: 15 minutes Cooking Time: 45 minutes

Ingredients:

9-inch frozen pie crust
1/4 c onion, chopped
1 c fresh spinach, chopped
1/4 c sliced button mushrooms (fresh, not canned)
1 egg

1 c egg whites (or egg substitute)
2 T flour
1 c low-fat cheddar cheese
1/4 c 1% milk
pinch each salt and pepper

Nutritional Info

Calories: 210.9

Total Fat: 10.9 g
Cholesterol: 41.1 mg
Sodium: 385.2 mg
Total Carbs: 14.7 g
Dietary Fiber: 0.8 g
Protein: 13.1 g

Instructions:

Preheat oven to 350 degrees Fahrenheit. Spray skillet with nonstick cooking spray. Add onions and cook until tender, about 3 minutes. Add spinach and sliced mushrooms, and sauté another 3 minutes; set aside. In a medium bowl, beat egg and egg whites, then add milk, flour, salt and pepper. Add cheese and sautéed vegetables to egg mixture to combine. Pour mixture into the pie crust. Bake for 40 to 45 minutes. Cover the edges of the crust with foil if browning too soon.

Makes 6 servings (1/6 of quiche each)



Strawberries



Balsamic Strawberries with Ricotta Cream

Prep time: 10 minutes Cooking Time: 2 minutes

Ingredients:

1 c part-skim ricotta cheese
2 T honey
1/2 t vanilla extract
3 T balsamic vinegar
2 T sugar
1 (16-ounce) container of strawberries, hulled and quartered
2 T fresh basil leaves, cut into ribbons

Instructions:

Put the ricotta cheese, honey and vanilla extract into a food processor or blender and process until smooth, about 1 minute. Transfer to a small bowl and refrigerate for at least 2 hours.

In a small saucepan, combine the vinegar and sugar and bring to a boil. Simmer over medium heat for 2 minutes, stirring occasionally. Allow to cool completely. In a medium bowl, toss the berries with the basil and the balsamic syrup. Divide the cream among 4 cocktail glasses, top with the berry mixture and serve.

Makes four 4 servings (1/2 c berries plus 1/4 c cream mixture)

Nutritional Info

Calories: 176.5

Total Fat: 5.2 g
Cholesterol: 19.2 mg
Sodium: 82.7 mg
Total Carbs: 26.0 g
Dietary Fiber: 2.1 g
Protein: 7.7 g

Baby Spinach Salad with Strawberries and Toasted Almonds

Prep time: 5 minutes

Ingredients:

1 T balsamic vinegar
3 T olive oil
1 t Dijon mustard
2 t honey
salt and fresh ground pepper to taste
1 c fresh baby spinach
1 c sliced strawberries
1/3 c slivered almonds, lightly toasted

Instructions:

Combine the first five ingredients in a salad bowl. Add the spinach, strawberries and almonds and toss well to coat. Divide the salad into four equal salad bowls and serve.

Makes 4 servings.

Nutritional Info

Calories: 164.4

Total Fat: 14.8 g
Cholesterol: 0.0 mg
Sodium: 77.7 mg
Total Carbs: 7.0 g
Dietary Fiber: 2.1 g
Protein: 2.3 g

Strawberry-Oat Muffins

Prep time: 20 minutes Cooking Time: 20 minutes

Ingredients:

1 c quick oats
1 c lowfat buttermilk
1 c whole wheat flour
1 t baking powder
1/2 t baking soda
1 t salt
1 egg
1/4 c unsweetened applesauce
3/4 c brown sugar
1 t vanilla
1 c chopped fresh strawberries

Instructions:

Preheat oven to 375 degrees Fahrenheit. Grease and flour a muffin pan or use paper liners. In a small bowl, combine oats and buttermilk, and let stand five minutes. In a medium bowl, combine flour, baking powder, baking soda and salt; set aside. In a large bowl, beat together the egg, applesauce, brown sugar and vanilla. Blend in the oat-buttermilk mixture. Stir in the flour mixture, just until moistened. Fold in strawberries. Fill muffin cups 2/3 to 3/4 full. Bake in the preheated oven for 15 to 20 minutes or until a toothpick inserted into the center comes out clean.

Makes 12 muffins.

Nutritional Info

Calories: 143.6

Total Fat: 1.7 g
Cholesterol: 18.5 mg
Sodium: 317.9 mg
Total Carbs: 28.6 g
Dietary Fiber: 3.0 g
Protein: 4.8 g

