

Reading time: 2 mins

Earth Action: Search for Seasonal Food

By [Gemma Alexander](#)

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Earth911 is honoring the 52 years of Earth Day with 52 Actions for the Earth. Each week through Earth Day 2023, we will share an action you can take to [invest in the Earth](#) and make your own life more sustainable. This time of year, most of us are thinking about the holidays and planning traditional holiday meals. But few of us stop to think about how those dishes became associated with the holidays in the first place. This week, you can take action for the Earth by learning about seasonal foods.

Action: Search for Seasonal Food

Eating Seasonally

Before the invention of refrigeration and the age of industrial agriculture, people had no choice but to eat the local foods that were in season. When livestock breed naturally and grow on forage, [fresh meat](#) is seasonal – that's why we eat turkey at Thanksgiving and cured hams at Easter.

Nowadays, we might look forward to the two weeks when fresh [lychees](#) are available or decide to throw a barbecue when we see the first fresh corn in summer. But many of us no longer even know when most foods are in season. We think nothing of including fresh tomatoes in a winter salad.

What Do You Think?

Are you considering moving because of climate change?

- Yes
- I'm researching my options to decide
- No

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You can have strawberries at Christmas and asparagus in October. But doing so takes a heavy toll on the planet. [Transporting fresh food](#) for thousands of miles takes a lot of energy. Frozen foods – even the ones in cardboard boxes – generate a lot of [nonrecyclable plastic packaging](#) and are also energy-intensive, requiring refrigeration along the [distribution chain](#) from the manufacturer to the grocery store to your [home freezer](#). Eating seasonally doesn't just save energy (and its associated carbon emissions) it also saves money on your grocery bill and helps you stay in tune with natural rhythms – there's a reason people only want pumpkin spice lattes in the autumn.

Winter Season

Even without knowing when things naturally ripen, we all know that gardens grow in summer. So it might seem strange to think about seasonal foods in winter. And it's true that in many climates, people survived on [stored](#) and [preserved](#) foods almost exclusively in winter – root crops, gourds, and anything that could be canned or dried. But it's possible to grow winter crops of many fresh vegetables in many climates.

What's in Season

The most enjoyable way to find seasonal produce is visit a [year-round farmers market](#), which has the added benefit of supporting local farmers and [local food resilience](#). If you don't have a farmer's market nearby in winter, look online by googling "what's in season near me" or check the [Seasonal Food Guide](#) (which also gives tips on choosing the best produce). Of course, [growing your own produce](#) will really help you get in tune with the seasons.

Depending on where you live, you might not find very much seasonal produce, or you might be surprised how much is actually available even in winter. But since you're starting in the leanest part of the year, every month that you continue looking for seasonal produce will seem more abundant.

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By [Gemma Alexander](#)

Gemma Alexander has an M.S. in urban horticulture and a backyard filled with native plants. After working in a genetics laboratory and at a landfill, she now writes about the environment, the arts and family. See more of her writing [here](#).

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