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HEALTH & WELLNESS CENTRE

Finding Meaning, Creating Purpose



THE IMPORTANCE OF EATING SEASONAL FOODS



There's something deeply grounding about feeling more connected to the natural rhythms of life, especially when it comes to food. In a world where convenience often overrides consciousness, where strawberries can be found in winter and avocados are available any time of year, it's easy to forget how nature intended food to grow and nourish us. The way food was meant to be experienced wasn't dictated by demand or availability, but by the cycle of the seasons. And that's where seasonal eating steps in—not as a fleeting trend, but as a quiet return to something more instinctive and meaningful.

Seasonal food is simply food that's harvested at its natural peak, during the time of year when it thrives in its own environment without needing to be manipulated or forced. It's food that has had the time and conditions to fully develop its nutrients, flavour, and energy. When you think about seasonal eating, it's not just about what's on your plate—it's about eating food that's in sync with the time of year and often grown closer to home.

The idea of seasonal eating isn't new. It's how people have eaten for generations. Before the rise of global food distribution and refrigeration, people ate what was available at that time in their region. Now, with almost everything accessible year-round, it's easy to forget that a peach in July and a peach in December are not the same fruit. One was picked in its prime and offered fresh, the other harvested early, stored, shipped, and made to look ripe on a shelf.

When produce is harvested in season, it tends to contain more nutrients. That's because it's allowed to ripen naturally, in its own time, often in the soil or on the vine, without artificial light, heating, or long storage. That natural development means you're getting a food that's denser in vitamins, minerals, and antioxidants. These nutrients support everything from immunity and digestion to energy and hormonal balance. The food tastes better, too. There's something unmistakably satisfying about a tomato ripened in the sun or berries picked at the peak of summer sweetness. The texture, the juice, the colour—it all adds to an eating experience that feels more nourishing and fulfilling.



What's also fascinating is how seasonal food naturally seems to align with the body's needs during different times of the year. In the colder months, it's no coincidence that we crave more grounding and warming foods. Root vegetables, dark leafy greens, and citrus fruits dominate the scene—foods that offer immune support and help us feel more sustained. These aren't just comforting; they're also deeply supportive to the immune and digestive systems, which often take more strain in winter.

As spring and summer roll in, there's an entirely different crop of foods available. Suddenly we're drawn to lighter, water-rich options—berries, cucumbers, tomatoes, lettuces, and herbs. These support hydration, digestion, and the natural desire to feel lighter as the days grow longer and we become more active. Seasonal food doesn't just reflect the weather; it supports us in adapting to those shifts. When you eat with the seasons, your body often responds with more ease. Meals feel more satisfying, digestion tends to improve, and eating becomes less about overthinking and more about listening to what actually feels good and right in that moment.

Eating this way also encourages variety. When you follow the seasons, your meals naturally rotate throughout the year. You're not eating the same fruit or vegetable week after week, which helps reduce the risk of nutrient gaps and food boredom. That diversity matters. Different colours, textures, and plant compounds feed the body in different ways, and rotating your produce intake keeps meals interesting and aligned with what's available locally.

Another valuable layer of seasonal eating is the connection it creates between you and your local food system. When you choose produce that's in season in your area, you're more likely to be supporting local growers. The food hasn't travelled thousands of kilometres or sat in storage for weeks. It's fresher, more vibrant, and more reflective of your environment. Supporting local farmers strengthens the local economy, reduces the environmental impact of long-haul food transport, and often results in cleaner, more carefully grown produce.

There's also a sustainability aspect that can't be ignored. Choosing seasonal, local food means fewer carbon emissions, less packaging, and a reduced reliance on artificial growing conditions. It's a small but powerful step toward a more mindful relationship with the planet. It's about eating in a way that's not only better for your body but gentler on the earth. The environmental impact of our food choices is significant, and seasonal eating offers a quieter, more conscious alternative to an overly industrialised system.

Cost is another factor where seasonal food has the edge. When a fruit or vegetable is in abundance, it tends to be more affordable. When it's out of season, that same food has likely been shipped from far away, stored in cold rooms, and priced higher to cover those costs. So not only are you getting better quality when you eat seasonally, but you're often spending less. That makes it easier to stay on track with health goals without feeling like you're constantly navigating around expensive, imported options.



One of the often-overlooked joys of seasonal eating is how it can inspire more creativity in the kitchen. When you're working with what's available now, you're more likely to explore new recipes, rediscover forgotten ingredients, and experiment with flavour combinations that reflect the time of year. Cooking and eating become more intuitive, more dynamic, and more enjoyable. It's less about rigid planning and more about letting the season guide your meals. There's something fulfilling about looking forward to the return of certain fruits and vegetables each year. It adds a sense of anticipation and rhythm to how you eat.

In South Africa, the variety of climates across the regions creates a rich and diverse range of seasonal produce all year round. Summer, which runs from December to February, is when you'll see a vibrant explosion of fresh fruits and vegetables. Think of juicy watermelons, ripe mangoes, sweet litchis, and fragrant guavas. Vegetables like green beans, zucchini, tomatoes, and colourful peppers thrive in the summer heat. The produce during this time is hydrating and full of natural sugars, supporting energy and movement during the longer, sunnier days.

As autumn sets in from March to May, the air cools and the harvest shifts. You'll start to see more apples, pears, grapes, and figs appearing in markets. Root vegetables like pumpkins, butternut squash, and sweet potatoes become staples, along with cruciferous vegetables like broccoli and cauliflower. This is a season of transition—foods become a bit more grounding, preparing the body for the cooler months ahead while still offering sweetness and nourishment.



Winter, which stretches from June through August, brings a welcome bounty of citrus fruits—lemons, oranges, naartjies, and grapefruits offer immune support and a bright burst of flavour. You'll also see hardy vegetables like cabbage, Brussels sprouts, spinach, and leeks making their way into seasonal cooking. These are the warming, sustaining foods that help carry the body through the colder, darker months.

Then spring arrives from September to November, bringing with it a lighter, fresher harvest. It's a time when the markets begin to fill with berries, green peas, artichokes, asparagus, and baby greens. There's a return to lighter cooking and a feeling of renewal reflected in the seasonal produce. Spring foods are often detoxifying and energising, helping the body shift from the slower pace of winter into the vitality of warmer days.

Eating seasonally brings you closer to nature, but more importantly, it brings you closer to yourself. It's a way of tuning into the rhythms that already exist around and within you. When you eat with the seasons, meals become more intuitive, your body feels more supported, and your choices start to reflect more ease than effort. It's not about perfection. It's about being more aware, more connected, and more intentional with how you nourish yourself.



In a time where so much of life feels rushed and disconnected, seasonal food reminds us that there's still value in slowing down, paying attention, and embracing what the moment offers. It's not just about what's in season. It's about living—and eating—in a way that feels more grounded, more aligned, and ultimately more human.



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