

# A Simple Guide to Eating Seasonally in Winter



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# INTRODUCTION



Eating with the seasons is as old as humanity itself despite the current trendiness of it all. Our foremothers wouldn't have given it a second thought. Before grocery stores and expedited shipping the only things available to our ancestors were seasonal and local foods. It was easy because there were no other choices. The plethora of produce and boxed foods in our local stores make seasonal eating seem not only outdated but difficult to navigate.

It's not difficult, however; it just takes a slight bit of reframing of ingrained modern habits. While no one is suggesting we eschew the convenience of modern grocery stores, eating with the natural rhythms of the earth is a great way to watch the budget and keep a body healthy.

The following pages will help you decide on seasonal foods and meals in general terms. It is important to remember that while Winter may 'officially' begin on December 21st (in the northern hemisphere) - depending on location in the world, it could come weeks earlier or weeks later. Don't be locked into dates on the calendar, but rather embrace the seasons as they present themselves in your local area.

## Some General Guidelines on Determining Seasonal Food

Look to the earth first and foremost. If you keep a garden, obviously whatever is growing and ready to eat is in season. Don't keep a garden, hit the local farmer's market. If the local farmer's are growing it and selling it, it's in season.

Don't have access to either a garden or local farmer's market? The seasonal produce sheets in this book will guide you through most commonly available seasonal foods. When shopping at the grocery store be sure to check the origins of fresh produce. If you live in Montana and the produce is coming from Australia it's not likely in season for you.

Of course, there is a place for preserved foods in our menus - like canned or frozen fruits and vegetables. Add these as necessary and desired to meal plans. If you preserved it yourself, that's an awesome way to extend the seasons, but there's no shame in buying some canned tomatoes or frozen mangos either.

# INTRODUCTION



## Forget Perfection

Just because you live in the great white north, that doesn't mean you can't have a lemon now and then. The idea is to eat as seasonally as possible and as often as feels comfortable. There's no reason to make this feel like some kind of deprivation experiment.

As in all things, practice makes it easier and more efficient. The more we incorporate seasonal foods into meal plans and recipes, the easier it becomes. If eating seasonally is a completely new concept, aim for just one or two meals a week for a while and then increase gradually as it becomes more routine.

It is an admirable goal to eat only or mostly local food. However, it can be very difficult to maintain and it can get boring depending on location in the world.

Rather than striving for something that is hard to achieve, find a balance in your seasonal meal plan. Eat local and in season whenever possible. Use in season but not necessarily local food to fill in the gaps.

In season food will always be less expensive in the grocery store. Sweet potatoes are cheaper in winter, for example, and asparagus is likely astronomical in price.

## What About Winter?

Winter food is different than other seasonal food and yet no less amazing, wonderful, and creative. Winter season food is healthy and yes, full of comfort for cold weather and beyond.

This is the time of year in which we eat seasonal produce but also make use of all the preserves we made in the rest of the year. Use these ideas for making the most of fresh and preserved food for delicious meals all winter long.

Winter can be the toughest season in learning to eat in harmony with the earth and with ancestral eating - but that's more because we are out of practice than a reality. Our grandmothers and their grandmothers did it, we can too with just a little ingenuity and practice.

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## WINTER VEGETABLES

For those living in the north, not much is actually growing in the winter but there are definitely vegetables that are in season even under the cover of snow. Many of these are vegetables that are inherently good keepers without needing much extra preservation.

In warmer climates, there are likely plenty of things growing that make fresh eating easier. Either way, many of the same vegetables are in season for all climates.



### Hardy Greens

In warmer climates local and/or homegrown greens might still be available. Things like kale, chard, and cabbage might be easy to find.

In the colder locations growing bean sprouts or micro-greens for fresh and nutrient dense fresh greens is easy and fun.



### Roots

Beets, potatoes, carrots, sweet potatoes, turnips, rutabagas, yams, parsnips, etc. All of these humble root vegetables can be found most of the year because they store incredibly well.

They're frugal, full of flavor, healthy, and incredibly adaptable as side dishes, soup ingredients, casserole fillers, and more.



### Winter Squash

Pumpkin is not the only option, in fact it probably isn't always the tastiest winter squash option. Scour local farms and the grocery store for different, flavorful options.

Experiment with all the different types and find what you like best. Try spaghetti, acorn, buttercup, hubbard, and whatever is easily found and cheap. Most winter squashes can easily be substituted for one another in recipes so don't get worried about specific varieties.

Make your own pumpkin puree from any winter squash and skip the expensive canned version on the grocery store shelves. Use this puree for soups, pies, baked goods, casseroles, and more.





## WINTER FRUITS

Like vegetables, in the north most of the winter fruits are things that store really well or come from other locations where they grow naturally. Remember balance is the key.

Again, look to your local area for cues, some mild climates may have fresh strawberries in late winter. Use this as a general guide, not a hard and fast rule.



### Citrus

Oranges, lemons, limes, grapefruit, and more are in season in the winter. Take advantage of their vitamin C and deliciousness. Eat them as snacks, for breakfast, in salads, and more.



### Apples

Mostly thought as of a fall fruit, apples store well meaning they can often be found in winter for a frugal price. Eat them fresh for a change from preserved fruits.



### Pears

Like apples, pears store incredibly well meaning they can be eaten fresh through much of the year and make for an interesting, fresh change in the winter season.





## Planning Ahead / Using the Pantry

A bit of planning and preserving can go a very long way in making winter meals nutritious and keeping them from being boring. This needs to be done in the warmer seasons.

Make and freeze the pesto when herbs are abundant. Can applesauce or peaches according to what you can find. Freeze or dehydrate vegetables, etc.

Do as much or as little as you desire, can reasonably fit into your schedule, and the

available space. Fill your pantry in a way that it can be filled and still be useful to you. Not everyone has tons of freezer space, etc. Use what you have and make the most of it.

Don't make preservation unnecessarily 'fancy.' Sure you can make 20 quarts of tomato sauce but canning stewed tomatoes is easier and can be made into sauce later, if desired. Don't bother freezing or dehydrating things your family won't eat.



### Dried Beans

The humble dried bean is often overlooked as boring or fussy but is neither. Again, dried beans can be found most any time of year and frugally at that. However, winter is a great time to take advantage of their hardiness and long cooking time.

Look for local types to keep your pantry local oriented and perhaps try new things at the same time.



### The Spice Rack

Be sure to keep your spice rack stocked with herbs and spices to season food and use for hot drink making.

All the things to supplement your cooking, like dried oregano or ground cumin.

But also things like tumeric for making golden milk or mint for herbal tea.



# Winter Meal Planning

## PERMISSION TO BE COZY & NUTRIENT DENSE

Despite being a lean season, winter still provides plenty of food for creative and easy cookery. Don't let the idea of seasonal cooking become a sticking point. Simply cook familiar foods.

Winter is often a chilly time and the perfect opportunity for simple meals that take a long time to cook. That long cooking time whether on the stove top or in the oven often means adding much needed warmth to the house as well.

### Casseroles

Winter does tend to be a time of richer, denser food as our bodies try to keep warm. This does not mean we have to eat dishes laden with canned cream of mushroom soup. Make homemade casseroles from pasta, sauce, meats, and veggies. Layer taco seasoned meat or beans with salsa and tortillas for a tex-mex style lasagna. Bake winter squash with noodles and cheese for a healthier twist on the standard macaroni and cheese.

### Pizza

I'm not sure that pizza ever goes out of season but it definitely has a place in the winter season meal rotation. Sprouts and sauerkraut make excellent pizza topping as do bits of local meats and other vegetables. Pizza is almost always welcome, makes a fun family movie night dish, and is even great for casual company. It's an easy way to introduce seasonal eating to skeptics, too.





# Winter Meal Planning

PERMISSION TO BE COZY &  
NUTRIENT DENSE

## Soups & Stews

These one pot meals tend to be warming and filling on cold winter days. Use combinations of root vegetables with meats, home-preserved vegetables, dried beans, and grains. These can often be whipped up in a hurry on the stove top or cooked all day in a slow cooker. Soups may be humble in nature but they can be bowls packed with comforting nutrition.

## Simple Courses

Meals don't have to be time intensive affairs. Keep it simple – broil a pork chop and serve it with some canned green beans and homemade sourdough rolls. Roast a whole chicken and bake potatoes at the same time. The long cooking time will help warm up a house too. Pack lunches with small salads of micro-greens, fermented vegetables, and dried fruit. A breakfast of broiled grapefruit and toast is always nice with some tea or coffee. Put a whole roast in the crockpot with carrots and rutabagas. Nothing complicated or very time consuming but all delicious and nutritious.







## Hubbard Squash & Sausage Soup

Use any winter squash you have on hand for a lovely, creamy, and filling soup.

***1 Pound of Ground Sausage***

***1 Medium Onion, chopped***

***1 Cup Carrots, sliced***

***1/2 Cup Celery, sliced***

***1 Tablespoon Olive Oil, optional***

***3 Cups Cooked & Pureed Hubbard Squash (or other squash)***

***14 ounces Canned Coconut Milk***

***4 Cups Chicken Broth***

***Salt & Pepper to Taste***

In a Dutch Oven, heat the olive oil.

Brown the sausage with the carrots, celery, and onions.

Add the squash puree and chicken broth. Season with salt and pepper.

Bring to a boil. Reduce heat and cover, simmering until the carrots are tender.

Stir the coconut milk into soup.

Heat gently and stir until the soup is warm.

Serve warm.

Makes about 4 servings.



## Stewed Apples & Sauerkraut

Tart and tangy, this cooked apple and sauerkraut side dish is ideal served alongside pork but also makes a delightful warm salad for lunch.

***4 Cups Sliced Apples, cored (about 1 pound)***

***4 Cups Sauerkraut, drained slightly***

***1 teaspoon Caraway Seeds***

***3 Tablespoons Butter***

***Salt & Pepper, taste***

Layer the sauerkraut and apples in a large saucepan.

Add water to the pan just to the top of the sauerkraut and apples.

Place over medium high heat. Bring to a boil.

Add the caraway seeds.

Cover the pan and reduce heat to low-medium. Cook until the apples are soft, approximately 20-25 minutes.

Remove cover, stir well. Increase heat to high and cook until the water is almost completely evaporated. Keep a close watch and stir to avoid scorching.

Stir the butter into the cabbage mixture and let it melt. Remove from heat when all of the water has evaporated. Add salt and pepper, to taste.

Serve hot.

Serves 4 make can easily be doubled or tripled to serve more.





## Rumpledethump

Potatoes, cabbage, and cheese combine for a filling and comforting side dish on a cold day.

***2 Pounds Potatoes (something starchy is best), peeled & cubed***

***¼ Cup Butter***

***1 ½ Pounds Cabbage, Shredded***

***1 Large Onion, Sliced***

***1 ½ Cups Sharp Cheddar Cheese, Grated (lightly packed)***

***Salt & Pepper to taste***

Preheat oven to 400 degrees.

Cover the potatoes with salted water in a saucepan. Boil gently until tender (15-25 minutes depending on size). Drain & mash.

In a skillet, melt butter over medium-high heat. Add the cabbage & onion, cook until wilted (probably about 20 minutes give or take).

Add the cabbage mixture to the potatoes with  $\frac{2}{3}$  of the cheese. Season with salt & pepper. Mix well.

Transfer the mixture to a casserole dish and level in the dish.

Sprinkle with the remaining cheese. Bake for 15 minutes or until cheese is melted and bubbly. The top will be golden brown. Serve immediately.

Serves 4.



## Herbal Hot Chocolate

This is probably the hot chocolate recipe I make the most. It's easy, delicious and a great way to get a few more healing and tasty herbs in our systems.

***2 Cups Milk (your choice - cow, goat, coconut, etc.)***

***3 Ounces Chocolate, roughly chopped (any - milk, white, dark)***

***2 teaspoons Dried Herb (any - mint, lavender, anise hyssop, etc.)***

Combine dried herbs and milk in a saucepan. Gently warm the milk, just until it begins to steam, no boiling or simmering - just warmed through. Remove from heat and cover with a lid.

Allow the herbs to steep in the milk for 10 minutes.

Strain the herbs from the milk. Place the infused milk back into the saucepan and add chopped chocolate. Heat gently, whisking the chocolate and milk until the chocolate is melted and the drink is hot, but again not boiling (don't scald the milk).

Flavor Combinations to Consider:

- Mint & Milk Chocolate
- Lavender & White Chocolate
- Anise Hyssop & Dark Chocolate

Serves 2 make can easily be doubled or tripled to serve more.





## Meet the Author



Hi, I'm Kathie. I'm a simple girl who lives on a small homestead in Northwest Montana with my soulmate, Jeff. Together we tap maple trees, grow organic fruits, herbs, and vegetables, preserve food, play with cats, make herbal remedies, craft, and generally work hard with our hands while laughing and trying to enjoy all the various bits of life.

I've been actively practicing voluntary simplicity since graduating from college over 25 years ago. I embrace simple and slow activities that center around a life lived close to the earth and the natural seasons.

I learned to cook from my grandmothers, garden from my father, and how to use herbs from local healers.

Whenever possible I like to share my skills and adventures with others. I do this through social media, blogging, and teaching both in person and online. You can find my writing and more information on my blog [Homespun Seasonal Living](http://HomespunSeasonalLiving.com).

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