Goal Getter

8 summer vegetables you should be eating



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Summer is in full swing and the availability of seasonal produce is starting to peak. As this happens, you may run into a few new-to-you produce options at your local market. Like most produce, lesser-known varieties are equally as nutrient dense so it is important not to overlook the unfamiliar. Below, I've outlined eight summer produce underdogs that are as nutritious, as they are delicious so venture out and give them a try.

Jicama: This lesser-known root vegetable tastes like a cross between a potato and a mildly sweet apple. Crisp and refreshing when raw, you can snack on it as is or even shred or slice it into slaws and salads. Rich in fiber and low in calories this tuber is a good source of immune boosting vitamin C. Try this: Roast jicama strips in the oven, like potatoes, with olive oil, salt and pepper to make baked jicama fries.

Kohlrabi: This alien-looking vegetable is in the cruciferous vegetable family, which means it is packed with disease fighting nutrients. One serving has over 100 percent of our daily recommended intake of vitamin C. Kohlrabi tastes a bit like raw cabbage, broccoli or cauliflower and can be enjoyed cooked or raw. Even the leaves are edible. Shred raw kohlrabi into salads and slaws, dice it and roast it, or add it to soups and stews. Try this: Shred apples with carrots and raw kohlrabi and toss it with a citrus and ginger vinaigrette for a festive summer slaw.

Mustard greens: This dark, bitter green is a powerful cancer fighter and detoxifier. Just one cup providesa whopping 922 percent(!) of your daily need of vitamin K, an antioxidant that promotes bone health and aids in blood clotting. Mustard green leaves can be used as a wrap or added to soups and stews. They can even be made into chips like those made with kale. Try this: Sauté mustard greens with fresh or unsweetened dried fruit and a bit of garlic. The sweetness of the fruit balances their bitter flavor.

Fennel: This veggie contains a variety of vitamins and minerals such as potassium, magnesium, phosphorus, calcium and antioxidants, as well as fiber. Including fennel in the diet has been linked to improved bone health, blood pressure, immune function and heart heath. All parts of the fennel plant, including the bulb, stalk, leaves and seeds are edible and have a licorice-like flavor. Fennel can be enjoyed raw or cooked and particularly loves to be roasted and stewed. Try this: Remove the stalks and fronds from a large fennel bulb. Keeping the base intact, slice the fennel bulb vertically from top to bottom. Toss the slices with olive oil, salt and pepper and grill on each side for 2-3

minutes. Finish with fresh lemon juice and zest.

Okra: A staple in southern cuisine, this notoriously slimy vegetable tends to be left out locally. Okra's infamous "slime" is actually mucilage, which helps sooth the gut and eases constipation. It is also a good source of insoluble fiber, which has been shown to help regulate blood sugar levels. To decrease the slime factor, choose smaller okra pods and make sure they are dry prior to cooking. Cook them quickly and with high heat like a simple sauté, broil or grill. Avoid salting okra until the end of the cooking process. Adding sliced okra to a soup or stew often masks any sliminess as well! Try this: Quickly sauté of sliced okra with other favorable vegetables like tomatoes, corn and shallot.

Purslane: Extremely rich in omega-3 fatty acids, this broad leafed weed is often considered a vegetable. It is also rich in cancer fighting antioxidants. Purslane leaves and stems are thick like a succulent and have a mild, lemony flavor. They can be enjoyed raw or cooked. Try this: Blend purslane into smoothies or pesto or add it to your salad green mix.

Eggplant: A nightshade vegetable, eggplant is in season starting in late July and early August. Eggplant has a meaty texture and is packed with nutrients like fiber and B vitamins. They also contain a variety of phytonutrients such as nasunin, which is found in its dark purple skin. Nasunin helps protect cells from damage caused by free radicals. Avoid saturating your eggplant in oil. This can happen easily when you pan or deep-fry it, as the flesh acts like a sponge. Instead, try grilling or roasting sliced or diced eggplant with a sprinkle oil, salt and pepper and herbs. You can also roast eggplant whole and then use the tender flesh for soups, dips and more. Diced eggplant can be sautéed with other vegetables as well or added to soups and stews. Try this: Roasted Eggplant Hummus Recipe[2].

Cabbage: Inexpensive and versatile, cabbage is well studied as a cancer fighter due to its antioxidant and anti-inflammatory properties. There are several types of cabbage from napa to savoy and red cabbage. All can be enjoyed raw as part of a salad or slaw and the leaves can be used as a wrap. Cabbage is the main component of the popular fermented condiments, kimchee and sauerkraut, which can be fun to make at home. Try this: DIY Kimchi Recipe[3].

Katie Cavuto MS, RD is a registered dietitian and trained chef. She is the president of Healthy Bites, a company offering local and national culinary nutrition services. Katie is also the

consulting dietitian for the Philadelphia Phillies, and a regular contributor on local and national TV as an expert in her field. Visit her website at nourishbreathethrive.com[4].

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