

2011 NS ACORN Conference  
Holiday Inn Halifax Harbourview

## Health Benefits of Eating in Season

By: Sandra Murphy, N.D., Nurture Therapeutics

### Executive Summary:

Sandra shares her knowledge of why eating in season is so healthy for us. She emphasizes a diet of varied, colourful, organic, and locally sourced foods. Read on to be inspired on how you can eat more healthfully and mindfully.

### Detailed Notes:

Sandra Murphy is a naturopathic doctor who has a practice in Halifax. She has taught at the Canadian School of Natural Nutrition.

In doing research for this presentation, Sandra went to the Select Nova Scotia website (a website devoted to helping people access local foods [www.selectnovascotia.ca](http://www.selectnovascotia.ca)) and looked up peaches (top of slide) and winter squash (bottom of slide). This search allowed her to see if there was a local source for each of these crops. And there are many places to purchase local peaches and squash in Nova Scotia. As an FYI, ACORN has also has a searchable database of all Maritime-based organic foods here: <http://acornorganic.org/acorn/databaseregional.html>

Getting in touch with the seasons is a good way to start eating healthy! Tomatoes ripe off the vine are delicious, and you're getting them at their peak nutrition. Over-cooked out-of-season carrots on the other hand, are not as appetizing or as healthy.

Try something new! Dietary variety is good, but the mono 365-day diet is not good for you, or as exciting.

Eating local is delicious:

We have anemic taste buds. Sandra tells her customers to go get organic veggies, and compare them with conventional veggies. You should be able to taste a difference, and you'll take in more nutrients if you eat what you WANT to eat. As a society, we are too dependent on salt and sugar to experience flavour.

Sandra is leery of some produce from California because FDA studies have shown that there are percolates in the water. Percolates are a component of rocket fuel. If this water is used to irrigate lettuce for example, then the lettuce will have these percolates

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in it. If you know your farmer, and the area where they live, you can have a better understanding if such contamination might be a problem.

Dirty Dozen: A list of fruits that contain the most pesticides if they are not organic, (i.e. grapes and nectarines). See here for the up-to-date list:

<http://www.ewg.org/foodnews/summary/>

### Eastern Perspectives

Diet understood through Yin/yang; a theory that everything exists in opposites. Male/Female, Hot/Cold, Wet/Dry etc.

We need to be eating the food that is right for our body. For example, barbeques in the summer are the worst because the meat is warm, char is warm, and the water is released right away. Since our bodies are also warm and often dehydrated in the summer, we should be putting cooling and hydrated foods in our body. Barbecues would therefore be better for a colder season.

Spring is a transition time, and an important time for cleansing your liver. Asparagus and beet greens are highly cleansing and abundant in spring. Mushrooms are also great for spring because they are cleansing and help moves things through a stagnant/sluggish body. Burdock is also great in the spring, and anything from the radish family.

In summer we need cooling things like greens and veggies.

In autumn, warming vegetables like early winter squash are great for the body.

The winter is not the time for salad greens, because we shouldn't put so much cold wet food into a cold wet environment. In the summer you can be a raw foodist, and in the winter eat cooked veggies.

### Importance of Variety

Among those trying to get people to eat better, there are two camps of thoughts as to how to achieve this goal. The first is to prescribe a very simple diet based in minimal variety so people don't go astray and have a better defined, basic sense of what they should eat, and what feels best for them. The second approach is one that promotes variety because variety keeps us healthy and adds/diversifies lots of vitamins and minerals. Sandra is in favor of this second view. Every different type of food in the plant family is a medicine cabinet of phyto-chemicals. She used the example of pomegranate juice. Scientists have been trying to figure out exactly what it is in pomegranate juice that is so healing, but they can't isolate one exact chemical, and it is likely that the healing properties come from the interaction of everything in it! So higher dietary variety contributes to better health.

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The standard American diet is a mono diet also known as the brown diet. Over 50% of the diet is rice, potato, bread and pasta. In her slides, the distorted pyramid comes from the book "Food Politics" by Marion Nestle.

There was a study done on kids aged 3 to 13 years asking them how many vegetables they ate a day. The study showed that most kids just ate one vegetable a day, and the most common vegetable were tomatoes...but from ketchup consumption (!) (and as a FYI tomatoes are no longer considered a vegetable, but a fruit instead). Potatoes, the second most common vegetable were consumed mostly from store-bought French fries.

By practicing a seasonal diet, every year a family can re-introduce foods that their kids may not have liked the year before. So it is good to have kids try foods again every season.

### Variety

In the stores, veggies are chosen for their shelf life, not for their nutritional value. But there are so many different varieties of fruits and vegetables; there are yellow, red, orange, green, purple, and black tomatoes for example.

It is important to eat food at its nutritional peak; going to the market or growing your own food can achieve this. When Sandra looks at the blood stream in a person who eats in season foods, and at the blood of those who eat foods from far away, there is an amazing difference. There is so much more health in those who eat local, seasonal foods. For example, even juice-fasts (a form of body cleanse) are more successful in places with fresh fruits, not from fruits that come from far away.

The vitamin C content in red peppers, tomatoes, apricots, peaches, and papayas are higher when picked at peak ripeness from the plant.

The longer you leave a vegetable after it is picked, the more nutrients that are lost. If you can't get fresh veggies, then frozen is better than old. When a food is left out, the nutrients are still there, but they are broken down by the enzymes naturally present in the food, and we cannot re-assemble it in our bodies, and therefore, that nutrient is lost to us.

Fruit and veggies that are old have a loss of texture, crunch, smell, and refrigeration. This is not optimal, and has a lower nutrient value.

### Summary

Fresh fruits and veggies in season have a better flavor, less nutrient loss, and match what your bodies need in term of Chinese medicine and the ying yang.

### Q and A

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Do tomatoes still have vitamins when cooked for canning?

Some foods, when cooked actually liberate chemicals. When tomatoes are cooked, extra chemicals are liberated from the skin, but you will kill sensitive molecules like vitamin C. You probably won't kill beta-carotene though.

Good ways of storing veggies include: cold storage, freezing, canning, and lacto fermenting.

It is very beneficial to eat lots of different varieties. The different colours have different health benefits. The more colourful your diet is the better. The varied pigments have a lot of nutritional benefits. Example: eating both golden and purple beets is good.

What is the difference between steaming and boiling?

Boiling is like a tea, it penetrates deeper, when steaming the heat doesn't penetrate as deep and therefore is better.