



# Seasonal Eats



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## WELCOME TO SEASONAL EATS!

Hello, fellow food lover! I'm Jessie Jones, Extension Family and Consumer Sciences Agent, with Bladen County Extension. My love for food runs deep - I can remember standing on a stool helping my Granny cook. Years down the road, combine that love with degrees in health promotion and nutrition, and you end up with a girl who delights in sharing that love and knowledge with others. I also believe cooking should be enjoyable and food should be accessible.

With the Seasonal Eats bi-monthly newsletter, it is my pledge to provide informative and inspiring content about seasonal produce, healthy and budget-friendly recipes, and kitchen tips. My hope is that you'll find inspiration and deliciousness in every issue. I'm excited to share my love of food, cooking, and nutrition with you. Let's dive in!

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FAMILY & CONSUMER SCIENCES PROGRAM

## WHAT'S IN SEASON?

November and December offer a bounty of seasonal produce, perfect for hearty dishes and festive celebrations. Here's a breakdown of some delicious and nutritious options:

### Root Vegetables

- **Sweetpotatoes:** These versatile tubers come in various colors and are rich in fiber, vitamins, and minerals. Yes, sweetpotato is one word. No, they are not the same as yams.
- **Carrots:** Crunchy and nutritious, carrots are a great source of beta-carotene and vitamin K.
- **Beets:** With their vibrant color and earthy flavor, beets are a healthy addition to salads, soups, and roasted vegetable dishes.
- **Rutabagas:** Similar to turnips, rutabagas have a slightly bitter, earthy taste and can be roasted, mashed, or pickled.



### Greens

- **Cabbage:** High in vitamins C and K, as well as fiber and antioxidants, cabbage can be eaten raw in salads, cooked in soups and stews, roasted, or fermented into sauerkraut.
- **Collards:** Mild and slightly bitter, this classic Southern vegetable is full of vitamins A, C, and K, as well as calcium and fiber, and can be steamed, sautéed, or added to soups and stews.
- **Mustard Greens:** Often used in Asian and Southern American cuisine, these greens can be steamed, sautéed, or added to salads.
- **Kale:** Packed with vitamins A, C, and K, as well as calcium, iron, and fiber, kale is a powerhouse vegetable. Add it to smoothies, salads, soups and stews, or steam or sauté it – there isn't much you can't do with kale.
- **Spinach:** Like kale, spinach is versatile. This mild, slightly sweet green is often featured in salads and wraps as well as being a star side all on its own.

### Winter Squashes

- **Butternut squash:** This popular squash has a sweet, nutty flavor and is often used in soups, purees, and desserts.
- **Acorn squash:** With its firm flesh and sweet taste, acorn squash is perfect for roasting or stuffing.
- **Pumpkin:** A classic fall flavor, pumpkins are often used in pies, soups, and breads. The seeds can also be saved and roasted to be used as a snack or a topping for salads or soups.





## WHAT'S IN SEASON?

### Other Seasonal Produce

- *Apples*: Crisp and delicious, apples are a versatile fruit that can be eaten fresh, baked, or used in sauces and pies. While apples are not grown here in Bladen County, taking a trip to the mountains of NC to visit an apple orchard is a great way to spend the weekend with family. Picking your own apples and sipping fresh apple cider is fun for all ages.
- *Brussels sprouts*: These small, cabbage-like vegetables have a slightly bitter taste and can be roasted, steamed, or sautéed.
- *Mushrooms*: Low in calories and fat, but packed with nutrients like vitamins B, C, and D, mushrooms are a versatile ingredient with a wide range of flavors and textures.
- *Peanuts*: Often used in Asian and African cuisine, peanuts can be eaten raw, roasted, or boiled (a personal favorite). Peanuts are rich in vitamins and minerals, including vitamin E, making them a great snack full of protein and healthy fats.



## LET'S COOK UP SOME COZY FALL FLAVORS

Fall is the perfect time to embrace the bounty of nature's seasonal offerings, especially with the holidays right around the corner. From hearty root vegetables to sweet apples to leafy greens, there's an abundance of ingredients to inspire delicious and comforting dishes. Give these tasty recipes a try this season!

### **Creamy Mashed Sweetpotatoes**

*Source: America's Test Kitchen*

- 4 tablespoons unsalted butter, cut into 4 pieces
  - 3 tablespoons heavy cream
  - 1 teaspoon sugar (can use white or brown sugar)
  - 2 pounds sweet potatoes (2 large or 3 medium), peeled, quartered lengthwise, and cut into 1/4-inch-thick slices
  - Salt and pepper (spices such as cinnamon, allspice, clove, etc. can be used in place of pepper)
1. Combine butter, 2 tablespoons cream, 1/2 teaspoon salt, 1/4 teaspoon pepper, sugar, and sweet potatoes in large saucepan. Cook, covered, over low heat until potatoes are fall-apart tender, 35 to 40 minutes.
  2. Off heat, add remaining tablespoon cream and mash sweet potatoes with potato masher. Serve.

## LET'S COOK UP SOME COZY FALL FLAVORS

### Toasted Pumpkin Seeds

*Source: Oklahoma State University Extension*

- 1 cup raw pumpkin seeds
  - 4 cups water
  - 2 tablespoon salt (adjust amount of salt to meet nutritional needs and flavor preferences)
  - 1 tablespoon vegetable oil
  - 1 tablespoon Old Bay seasoning (you can use any spice combination you like)
1. Separate seeds from flesh and strings by putting them in a colander, rinsing well and using hands to separate seeds. Rinse cleaned seeds.
  2. Put water, salt and cleaned seeds in saucepan. Bring to a boil, reduce heat and simmer 10 minutes. Drain seeds. Cool briefly and blot dry.
  3. Preheat oven to 300°F. Spray a 4-sided baking sheet or pizza pan with nonstick cooking spray.
  4. Combine seeds with oil and Old Bay seasoning in bowl. Mix well. Spread seeds one layer thick on prepared baking sheet. Bake 30 to 40 minutes until seeds reach desired brownness, stirring every 5 to 10 minutes (may require more frequent stirring toward the end of baking). Cool before eating.

### One-Pan Italian Sausage with White Beans and Kale

*Source: America's Test Kitchen*

- 2 (15-ounce) cans cannellini beans, rinsed, divided
  - 1 (28-ounce) can diced tomatoes, drained, divided, with juice reserved
  - 1 cup chicken broth
  - 2 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil
  - 1 pound sweet or hot Italian sausage links, pricked all over with fork
  - 1 onion, chopped fine
  - 3 garlic cloves, minced
  - 1 pound kale, stemmed and chopped
  - ¼ teaspoon table salt
1. Process ½ cup beans, ½ cup tomatoes, reserved tomato juice, and broth in food processor until smooth, about 30 seconds.
  2. Heat oil in Dutch oven over medium heat until shimmering. Add sausages and brown on all sides, about 5 minutes; transfer to plate. Add onion to fat left in pot and cook until softened, 5 to 7 minutes. Stir in garlic and cook until fragrant, about 30 seconds. Stir in kale, salt, pureed bean-tomato mixture, and remaining tomatoes, scraping up any browned bits. Cover and simmer, stirring occasionally, until kale is wilted and tender, about 15 minutes.
  3. Stir in remaining beans, then nestle sausages into pot along with any accumulated juices. Cover and simmer until sausages register 160 degrees and sauce is slightly thickened, about 10 minutes. Season with salt and pepper to taste, and serve.

## LET'S COOK UP SOME COZY FALL FLAVORS

### Homemade Peanut Butter

*Source: Illinois Extension*

- 16 oz. dry roasted peanuts (no salt added; you can roast your own peanuts if desired)
  - ½ teaspoon salt
  - ½ teaspoon cinnamon (optional)
  - 2 tablespoons honey (can start with 1 tablespoon if you don't want the peanut butter too sweet)
1. Add the peanuts to a food processor or high-power blender. Add the salt, cinnamon, and honey. Process the peanuts on high for 1-minute. Stop the food processor and scrape the sides. Continue to process at high speed, stopping the food processor to scrape the sides until the mixture has become glossy and thick. This may take several minutes.
  2. Initially, the peanut mixture will start out as crushed peanuts. The mixture will start to clump into a ball. Next, the mixture will look gritty. Finally, the mixture will become creamy and glossy. Taste the peanut butter. Add any additional ingredients to your liking.
  3. Scoop the peanut butter into a glass jar or container with a tight lid. 16 oz of peanuts should produce about 2 cups of peanut butter. Store the peanut butter in the refrigerator for up to six months. Oil separation will occur, so simply stir the peanut butter prior to eating.

## KITCHEN TIPS AND TRICKS

Here are some handy kitchen tips and hacks to make your cooking a smooth process and your kitchen experience more enjoyable:

- Have you ever heard the term “mise en place?” This French term means everything in its place, and when it comes to cooking, having everything in its place can mean the difference between success or failure. Save the headache – be sure to read your recipe completely and gather all the needed ingredients and equipment before starting.
- Mise en place isn't the only important factor when it comes to cooking. Cleaning as you go can save time – wash dishes while pasta is boiling, wipe down counters as soon as something spills – so you're not stuck in the kitchen working your way through a mountain of dishes.
- When preparing vegetables or meats, don't throw away the scraps. Put the scraps in a freezer bag and store in the freezer to make broth later.
- If a recipe calls for half of an onion, go ahead and chop the remaining half, storing in the freezer for later use. This can be done with other vegetables.



## KITCHEN TIPS AND TRICKS

Making sure food you prepare for family and friends is safe is a must. Mishandling of food can lead to others getting sick, so don't skip these food safety rules:

- **Wash your hands frequently:** Wash your hands before, during, and after preparing food, and especially after a trip to the bathroom.
- **Separate raw and cooked foods:** Use separate cutting boards and utensils for raw and cooked foods. Be sure to wash cutting boards and utensils between uses.
- **Cook food to the correct temperature:** Use a food thermometer to ensure food is cooked to the proper temperature. When it comes to meat, color is not an indicator of doneness.
- **Refrigerate leftovers promptly:** Refrigerate leftovers within two hours of cooking. When left out and food reaches temperatures between 41°F and 135°F, bacteria that causes illness grow rapidly.



## UPCOMING EVENTS

**Thanksgiving** – November 28-29 -- The office will be closed for Thanksgiving. Wishing everyone a wonderful Thanksgiving!

**Food Gifts Workshop** – December 10, 6 p.m., Bladenboro First Baptist Church, 500 S Main St., Bladenboro -- Participants will learn basic food safety, how to spot unsafe food items, and how to create safe food gifts. A hands-on activity will be included.

For accommodations related to disabilities, contact Jessie Jones at 910-862-4591 or [jessie\\_jones@ncsu.edu](mailto:jessie_jones@ncsu.edu) at least 7 business prior to the event.

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