

# NUTRITION BITES

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CARE MANAGEMENT

## Put Some Springtime into Your Diet

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The spring season is a time for new beginnings and rejuvenation. As you shed your winter jackets and gloves and put down the television remote to enjoy longer days and time outside in the warmer weather, you may find yourself craving lighter,

more refreshing foods. Springtime brings an abundance of produce to grocery stores and farmers' markets. Take the opportunity to pile your plate with this bounty and explore the flavors and health benefits of spring fruits and vegetables. This edition of the Nutrition Bites newsletter will highlight spring produce including favorites as well as some lesser known but equally delicious options.

### Artichokes

Spring is peak season for artichokes. You may have seen these green globes in the produce section, and they never made it into your cart as you were unsure of how to prepare and eat an artichoke. Or you may buy artichoke hearts in the can or jar. An artichoke is the bud of a thistle flower. The leaves cover a fuzzy center called the choke which sits on top of a meaty core, called the heart. While the fuzzy choke is inedible, the heart is completely edible, and the tender leaves can be eaten as well.

Beyond their tough exterior, artichokes contain high levels of antioxidants including vitamin C and silymarin and are a source of potassium, fiber, magnesium and folate.

### Asparagus


Although asparagus can be found at the grocery store year-round, its peak season is in the spring. During the spring, you may be able to purchase locally grown asparagus or find it on sale at the store. There are many varieties of these tall, lean stalks with the green variety being the most commonly available. Asparagus is a very good source of fiber, folate, vitamins A, C, E, and K and chromium, a trace mineral that promotes the ability of insulin to move glucose from the blood into the cells. Additionally, it is high in glutathione, an antioxidant that helps combat free radicals, which are molecules that can damage cells in the body. You get all these health benefits with only 40 calories for a one cup serving of cooked asparagus.

It is best to prepare and enjoy asparagus right away after purchasing. The optimal preparation methods are quick, waterless methods to preserve the nutrients and include steaming, grilling, roasting or stir-frying. Asparagus can also be served raw and combines well with other spring vegetables.

### Leeks

Leeks are a member of the allium family, along with onions and garlic, and look like giant green onions yet have a milder, more delicate flavor. The white base and green stalk are often used for cooking in creamy soups and stocks. Leeks are rich in flavonoids, which are antioxidants that may have anti-inflammatory, anti-diabetic and anti-cancer properties. These green and white giants also provide vitamin K, folate, vitamin C and lutein.





The process for growing leaks can cause dirt to collect between the layers of the plant therefore thorough cleaning is necessary to avoid getting dirt in your food. One method is to cut off the root, slice the leek vertically and hold under running water to rinse away dirt between the layers. Consider thinly slicing leeks and adding to salads, adding to mixed vegetables before roasting or serving sautéed leeks over salmon.

### Peas

Peas are a staple on many dinner tables and pack an often-underappreciated nutritional punch. April is peak season for fresh peas. Peas, including green peas, snow peas and snap peas, are part of the bean and pulse plant family. Nutrients in peas include lutein and zeaxanthin, which protect the eyes. Peas are a good source of vitamin C, vitamin E, zinc and other antioxidants that are thought to strengthen the immune system.

Although peas are filled with nutrients, they are starchy vegetables and therefore are higher in carbohydrates as compared to non-starchy vegetables. Due to this, keep your portion size to a ½ cup per serving. Struggling to find fresh peas? Frozen peas are a great substitute as they are picked at the peak of freshness and quickly frozen to preserve their nutrients.

### Rhubarb

Rhubarb is a ruby-red, mouth-puckering delicacy of long red leafstalks and is available in the spring. While it is classified as a vegetable, it is often recognized as a fruit due to its use in desserts. The stalks are fleshy, sour and acidic. While they can be eaten raw, cooked rhubarb is often preferred. Rhubarb is an excellent source of vitamin K, which is an essential vitamin for bone health and blood clotting. It is also rich in antioxidants, including the anthocyanins that provide the red color and proanthocyanins. These antioxidants have anti-bacterial, anti-inflammatory and anti-cancer properties.

When choosing rhubarb, look for stalks that are firm and crisp. Rhubarb leaves are harmful to eat due to

containing oxalic acid so be sure to remove leaves before cooking or eating. Do not cut the stalks until you are ready to use the rhubarb.

### Spinach

Greens, including arugula, dandelion greens, lettuce and spinach are abundant in the spring and may be some of the first local produce available at your farmers' market. Spinach is a low-calorie food that is full of nutrients and health benefits. Spinach is a good source of carotenoids (especially beta-carotene and lutein), flavanols, vitamin C and folate. Additionally, spinach provides fiber and plant-based iron. The nutrients in spinach may help to promote eye and bone health as well as contribute to cancer prevention.

Spinach is a versatile vegetable that can be served raw or cooked and is available fresh, frozen or canned. Add spinach to your lettuce mix for salads, wilt into pasta dishes or blend a handful into your morning fruit smoothie.

### Strawberries

The spring season is prime time for these juicy gems. Strawberries are packed with vitamins, fiber and particularly high levels of antioxidants known as polyphenols as well as vitamin C. The nutrients found in strawberries are known to increase beneficial HDL cholesterol, lower blood pressure and guard against cancer. A serving of strawberries (one cup or 8 medium-sized strawberries) provides just 50 calories and three grams of dietary fiber.

Strawberries do not continue to ripen after being picked so be sure to look for bright red berries with fresh green leaves. Also, be sure to flip over the container and look at the berries on the bottom to ensure freshness. Strawberries make a great topping for pancakes, mixed in with yogurt or as a healthy dessert. Although typically thought of as a sweet treat, consider adding strawberries as a juicy addition to a spinach salad.



# Featured Recipe

## Strawberry-Rhubarb Cobbler with Granola Streusel

For complete recipe and nutrition facts: [Eating Well](#)

Preparation time: 10 minutes

Total time: 50 minutes

Servings: 10



### INGREDIENTS

#### Filling

3 cups fresh strawberries,  
quartered  
3 cups fresh rhubarb or thawed  
frozen rhubarb, sliced  
¼ cup granulated sugar  
1 Tbsp cornstarch  
1 Tbsp lemon juice

#### Topping

½ cup light brown sugar, lightly  
packed  
½ cup old fashioned oats  
⅓ cup whole-wheat pastry flour  
¼ cup unsalted butter, softened

#### Nutritional Information:

Serving Size: ⅓ cup

Calories: 151

Fat: 5.2g

Carbohydrates: 26.3g

Fiber: 2.4g

Protein: 1.6g

Sodium: 60.8mg

### INSTRUCTIONS

1. To prepare filling: Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Coat an 11 by 7 inch baking dish with cooking spray.
2. Combine strawberries, rhubarb, granulated sugar, cornstarch, lemon juice and salt in a large bowl; transfer to the prepared baking dish.
3. To prepare topping: Combine brown sugar, oats, flour and butter in a medium bowl stir until thoroughly combined.
4. Crumble topping evenly over the strawberry-rhubarb mixture.
5. Bake the cobbler until the topping is golden, 35-40 minutes. Cool on a wire rack for 5 minutes, serve warm or at room temperature.

