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YOUR SEPTEMBER PRODUCE GUIDE



Along with the changing seasons come new fruits and vegetables that take the spotlight. Throughout September, as we cruise into fall, look at the produce that should be on your shopping list and some of the best ways to use them!

Tomatoes

You can't go wrong with tomatoes this month — heirloom, cherry, beefsteak, and Roma tomatoes are all in season, so fill up on them! Whether you make salsa, bruschetta, BLTs, marinara sauce, or tomato and basil soup, tomatoes are a staple!

Apples

Gala and McIntosh apples are in season now! Be sure to stock up — they're an excellent snack, or you can cut them up and dip them in a nut butter or sprinkle some cinnamon on top for an extra kick. You can even whip up an apple pie if you're feeling adventurous!

Green Beans

This time of year, green beans are in their prime. When picking out your green beans, look for crisp ones. Give them the snap test — if they snap when you bend them, you know they're ripe and ready to go!

Beets

Did you know that if you buy fresh beets, they stay good for weeks? You can roast them, steam them, or even pickle them. If you enjoy it, you can also eat them raw! Look for beets with attached greens and trim them off when you get home for optimal freshness.

Berries

Raspberries, blackberries, and blueberries are all in season now! You can snack on them, toss them in oatmeal or yogurt or even bake with them. Berries are a great source of antioxidants and a refreshing snack.

Carrots

Carrots are the sweetest in the fall! When choosing your carrots in the supermarket, scope out bunches with the greens still attached and trim them off when you get home. This will help to preserve their freshness longer!

The Addiction Is Real!

How to Curb Sugar Cravings the Healthy Way

I'm constantly reading and listening to podcasts and audiobooks — especially when it comes to information that can improve our health and wellness. I recently heard information I think is essential to share — I genuinely believe this can help you, your loved ones, and those around you to live a happier, healthier, and more fulfilling life!

First, let's talk about good feelings!

The hypothalamus is the brain's reward center. When we engage with things we enjoy, our bodies reward us with dopamine — a neurohormone responsible for feeling good. For example, if you have a sweet tooth and take a bite of ice cream, it's activated and kicks into action, releasing dopamine to signal that the event was positive. Once our body recognizes and processes the information, it craves more and reinforces our behaviors to get it. This "good feeling" can also result when we engage with things that interest us, such as a movie, social media, or a book. This is also the reason it's so hard to break away from social media or an interesting show or game — both for adults and kids. Our brain gets (artificially) rewarded and sends a signal to "feel good." When we feel this (fake) "good feeling," we want more of it. We are wired to be attracted to positive rewards. So our beautiful mind starts to search for more things that can trigger that dopamine surge — give me some sugar! Give me something to stare at! And watch your kids (or living partners) when they disconnect from their devices. Sometimes, they become moody or act differently.

Dopamine triggers can also be when someone tells you they appreciate you, you get a compliment, or you're told you're

doing a good job. That's why we like to please others and be good helpers; we feel good about doing it. Sugar is a huge dopamine trigger for many of us. Today, sugar is hidden in many foods and appears in various forms. Just read the back of any packaged food. Most likely there's a form of sugar in it (sometimes several different types of sugar!). Each time we ingest a trace of sugar, our body signals a "Jackpot!" feeling and wants more when our energy crashes. This is just one of many reasons why sugar is so addictive.

More people are addicted to sugar than anything else in the world. Don't believe it? Try eliminating a few sugary foods from your diet and see how long you can stay away! Or keep a journal to track your daily intake. The World Health Organization (WHO) recommends an average of 50 grams of sugar daily. Some health diets recommend 20 grams for better health benefits.

It's essential to remember that carbohydrates, such as bread, crackers and pasta, turn into sugar! Unless you already have a sugar-restricted diet, for the average American living in today's world, this is extremely difficult. Sugar is present in almost all of our packaged goods, and some foods contain our entire daily dose in just one serving.

If you deny your body that hit of sugar it expects (from habit), that's when cravings arise. Instead of giving in, try to satiate them with something fatty and savory — this may help the cravings dissipate and will keep you fuller longer.

When our bodies consume sugar, our glucose and insulin levels spike. Maintaining

these levels isn't just for people with diabetes! A few benefits for everyone include reducing risk of diseases, promoting clearer skin, fighting cognitive decline, helping with fat loss, and resisting the "hangry" sugar crashes. Here are some practical ways to keep your levels in check:

- Eat savory foods in the morning to keep your blood glucose levels low all day and limit cravings (think eggs, meat, fish, and veggies for breakfast — hold the toast and juice).
- Order matters. Did you know you can continue eating the same food, but the order you eat them determines your insulin level after a meal? Here's the secret. First, eat your veggies, then the fat/protein, then the carbs/sugar. This way, you can still enjoy the starchy rice or potato, and it will minimally affect the insulin level. If reversed, the rice/potato on an empty stomach will cause your insulin levels to skyrocket. Line your digestive system with veggies first. The fiber coats the inner lining and so does the fat. When the "junkier" food comes through, less of it gets into our system. Give it a two-week trial and see how you feel!
- Add a tablespoon of vinegar to your salad (or any dish) to lower your insulin levels for that meal — any vinegar works (apple cider, white, balsamic, etc.).

Your body is your most important asset — treat it well!

— Dr. Bernice Tepfitsky

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Unlock a World of Opportunities

How Extracurricular Activities Benefit Your Kids

As children return to school in August, they'll likely be interested in one or more extracurricular activities. Opportunities both in school and in the community are numerous, such as participating in a local play, joining a school club or sports team, and many others. Extracurricular activities are perfect for getting kids out of the house, but these ventures will also help them gain valuable experiences along with these three benefits.

IMPROVES SOCIAL SKILLS

One of the biggest concerns parents have had since we experienced lockdowns during the pandemic is that their children struggle to communicate with others. Most of these kids were away from their peers for a year or more, which weakened their social skills. Participating in an extracurricular activity gives your kids a chance to communicate with others outside of a school setting. They'll learn how other people think and how to best respond to certain situations.

BOLSTERS COLLEGE APPLICATIONS

If your child wants to attend college after high school, joining a club, team, or organization will

give them a leg up on other candidates. College admissions officers love to see students who participate in extracurricular activities because it shows they are involved in their community and possess leadership and teamwork skills. While extracurriculars are not as important as other factors for college admissions, they still play a decisive role in the college's choice to accept your child.

HELPS THEM DISCOVER THEIR PASSIONS

There are countless examples of kids discovering their true passion through participating in extracurricular activities. Your child might not become a professional athlete, but they might discover an alternate career path, like becoming a physical therapist or personal trainer by playing a sport. If your kid likes animals, they might find a prospective career path by volunteering at the zoo. If one activity doesn't appeal to them, try another. Before long, you'll find the perfect interest for your child.



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5 LOCAL EVENTS TO ADD TO YOUR CALENDAR

Even with fall on the horizon, summer isn't quite over yet! The weather is still perfect for getting outdoors, exploring, and enjoying time with family and friends. Here are some great activities to add to your calendar.

BERRY PICKING

Right now, berries are in season! Instead of picking some up at the grocery store or local farmers market, you can pick a basket or two yourself. Head out to Stadel's Farm & Market, Tom's Farm Market, Thompson Strawberry Farm, or Heider's Berry Farm and fill your buckets with delicious berries!

CONCERTS UNDER THE STARS

Before the weather cools off, visit Ravinia, one of the best outdoor venues in Chicagoland for unforgettable concerts. In August and September, several amazing artists are set to perform. It's a fun event everyone can enjoy!

THE MUSEUM OF ICE CREAM

New to Chicago, The Museum of Ice Cream is the perfect place to spend a summer afternoon. Here, you can swim in a pool filled with sprinkles, ignite your senses with tons of ice cream, enjoy rides and shows, and much more! Kids and adults alike will love visiting — after all, who doesn't like ice cream?

CHICAGO SUMMERDANCE

Have you ever wanted to learn to dance? Or maybe you've been meaning to branch out and explore a new style? Throughout the summer, Chicago SummerDance is hosting free dance lessons in several parks and neighborhoods, with all skill levels welcome. Visit ChicagoSummerDance.org for the full schedule of dates and venues.

CHICAGO JAZZ FESTIVAL

From Sept. 1-4, over Labor Day Weekend at Millennium Park, hear all types of jazz music at the Chicago Jazz Festival! This event will feature a ton of local talent and some delicious food and drinks. The best part is that admission is free for all!



HOW CREATIVITY HELPS YOU LIVE LONGER

When considering the key factors in active aging, most people talk about things like diet, exercise, and social connections. And while these things are all important, some studies show that engaging in creative activities can also lead to greater longevity.

To many people, "creativity" sounds like something you do with a paintbrush or pencil, but according to University of Connecticut professor James C. Kaufman, this doesn't have to be the case. You can find creativity in everyday tasks like parenting, yardwork, or even talking with friends — you just have to know where to look!

So, if you're looking to reignite your creative spark and live longer as a result, here are three ways you can bring more creativity into your everyday life.

THINK OUTSIDE THE BOX — AND TRAVEL THERE, TOO.

Traveling is more than fun; it's great for inspiring creativity. In fact, a historical study by the Journal of Personality and Social Psychology found that individuals who travel have more creative success, perform better on divergent thinking tests, and are generally more open-minded.

The trick with thinking and traveling outside the box doesn't always need to be about going to far-off lands with another language. Sometimes, it's just about trying that new deli that opened down the block, going to that flower show on the other side of town, or even trying to bake bread for the very first time. The goal is to expose yourself to any new experience and view it with a childlike wonder. Worry about nothing other than having fun!

USE WHAT YOU KNOW TO MAKE SOMETHING NEW!

As we age, we collect a lifetime's worth of valuable knowledge, but just having information isn't creative. Combine your wisdom with family recipes, knitting, sewing, or woodworking to develop a brand-new creation!

SEEK NEW PERSPECTIVES.

If you do the same thing every day and only surround yourself with like-minded people, you'll never be exposed to new ideas. The trick to inspiring creativity in your life is to see the world in a different way. You can do that by reading literature, talking to people, and listening to media that challenges your ideas.

Sweet Potato Jalapeño Poppers

Inspired by ForksOverKnives.com

INGREDIENTS

- 1 lb sweet potatoes, peeled and cut into large pieces
- 2 tbsp white wine vinegar
- 1/4 cup unsweetened plant-based milk
- 1/2 tsp ground turmeric
- 1/4 cup nutritional yeast
- Salt and pepper, to taste
- 7 fresh jalapeños, halved lengthwise and seeded

DIRECTIONS

1. Preheat oven to 400 F. Line a baking sheet with parchment paper.
2. In a large saucepan, place sweet potato chunks in a steamer basket. Add water just below steamer basket and boil. Steam for around 10 minutes. Remove sweet potatoes, and let cool in a bowl before mashing.
3. In a small saucepan, whisk together milk, yeast, vinegar, and turmeric. Boil, then cook for 1 minute or until thickened.
4. In a blender, combine milk mixture and mashed sweet potatoes until smooth. Season with salt and pepper.
5. Spoon sweet potato mixture into jalapeño halves. Place on baking sheet and bake for 30 minutes or until lightly browned.