



Use 'Top 10' lists to add variety

Occasionally I see lists of the "top 10" most nutritious fruits and vegetables, but they're never quite the same as each other. How much should I pay attention to these kinds of lists?

Trying to list the "best" fruits and vegetables is always going to vary depending on the criteria used. Sometimes those lists rank produce according to their vitamin and fiber content; sometimes they focus on in-season produce.

Often, such lists are generated according to the antioxidants in different foods. Those are typically based on a food's "ORAC" score, which stands for "oxygen radical absorbency capacity," a test-tube measurement that estimates a food's overall antioxidant potential. However, ORAC scores don't include the bioavailability of these health-promoting substances — something that just can't be measured currently.

Still, it's always interesting to take a look at such lists. Inevitably, they provide some inspiration for trying a wider variety of fruits and vegetables, which is always a good thing. Consuming many different kinds of fruits and vegetables is the key to getting the most bang for your produce buck.

One way to make sure you're getting a good variety of produce is to pay attention to their color. The pigments in produce often indicate

the type of nutrients and, particularly, the phytonutrients the food contains. Phytonutrients are substances that plants produce for their own good, to protect themselves from plant diseases and other potential harm. Luckily, they also appear to protect human health as well.

Some phytonutrients are actually plant pigments. So, consuming a wide variety of differently colored fruits and vegetables is a good way to ensure you're getting a good variety of both nutrients and phytonutrients. Focus on these:

- **Green**, including spinach and other leafy greens, broccoli, okra, green pepper, kiwifruit, green grapes, honeydew and limes.
- **Orange and deep yellow**, including corn, sweet potatoes, yellow peppers, carrots, grapefruit, peaches, pineapple and cataloupe.
- **Purple and blue**, including eggplant, purple cabbage, blueberries and blackberries, plums and raisins.
- **Red**, including red peppers, red potatoes, tomatoes, rhubarb, red onions, pink grapefruit, watermelon, red grapes, cherries and cranberries.
- **White, tan and brown**, including cauliflower, jicama, onions, potatoes, turnips, bananas, brown-skinned pears and dates.

For more information and ideas, see <http://www.fruitsandveggiesmorematters.org/>.

Chow Line is a service of Ohio State University Extension and the Ohio Agricultural Research and Development Center. Send questions to Chow Line, c/o Martha Filipic, 2021 Coffey Road, Columbus, OH, 43210-1044, or filipic.3@osu.edu.



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By **Martha Filipic**
614-292-9833
filipic.3@osu.edu

Editor:

This column was reviewed by Julie Kennel, nutrition program manager for Ohio State University Extension and director of the Dietetic Internship Program in the Department of Human Nutrition in the College of Education and Human Ecology.

Communications and Technology News and Marketing
2021 Coffey Road
Columbus, OH 43210-1044
614-292-2011

208 Research Services Building
1680 Madison Ave.
Wooster, OH 44691-4096
330-263-3780

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