

Catch Spring Veggies at Their Best

After a long winter of frozen and canned vegetables – or pricey and not-so-perky options in the produce aisle – fresh foods are finally in season again. In grocery stores, farmers markets and your own garden, it's time to stock up on bright green vegetables at their peak flavor and nutrition.

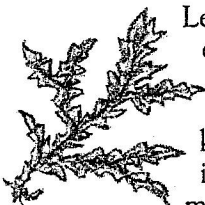
INCORPORATING THE CRISP, DELICIOUS HARBINGERS of spring into your daily menus comes with a host of sure-fire health benefits. In addition, seasoning your veggies with herbs and spices will add an extra helping of phytochemicals and other powerful plant substances to help reduce cancer risk.



Spiky stalks of **asparagus** provide lots of folic acid and beta-carotene, some vitamin C and the health-protective antioxidant glutathione.

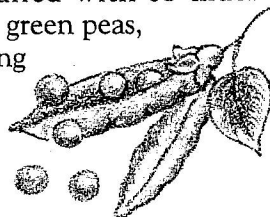
The unique, delicate flavor of asparagus is now at its most abundant and most affordable. Break off tough ends of stalks before cooking. Boil asparagus until crisp-tender; you'll enjoy munching on these crisp spears in salads. Or roast it with a small amount of olive oil, lemon and antioxidant-rich garlic.

The elegant **artichoke** comes laden with cancer-fighting powers and few calories. The average 10-ounce artichoke is fat-free, low in sodium, rich in fiber, and also provides vitamin C, folic acid, magnesium and potassium. Choose soft green artichokes that are heavy and firm. To prepare, pull off the lower outer petals, cut off most of the stem and trim off the tips of petals. Steaming whole artichokes will best preserve their nutrients and flavor; serve with your favorite lowfat dipping sauce. Or cut an artichoke into quarters and roast with salt, pepper, garlic and your favorite herbs.



Learn to love leafy greens. The many different types will bring new life to your salads, soups and side dishes. Especially tasty right now are arugula, chard, endive, escarole, kale, radicchio and watercress. They're high in vitamin A, and depending on your choice, may also provide vitamin C, calcium, iron and potassium. For maximum freshness, serve them within 1 to 2 days of purchase. Store them, unwashed, in a plastic bag in the refrigerator.

Consider the simple **pea**. Who would guess that such a tiny vegetable could be stuffed with so much nutrition? When choosing fresh green peas, look for well-filled pods containing large, round peas. Unlike snap peas and snow peas, these pods are not edible. Try the following recipe; you'll be loading up on



fiber and getting healthy doses of folic acid, beta-carotene, vitamin C, vitamin B₆, magnesium and iron.

Risi e Bisi

Literally, "Rice and Peas," this much-loved recipe from Italy makes good use of a bumper crop of fresh garden peas. Traditionally made with white rice and bacon, this equally tasty version uses brown rice to boost nutrition. Cooking the rice in broth instead of water will add more flavor.

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| 1½ Tbsp. olive oil | ½ cup water |
| ½ cup minced onion
(about 1 small onion) | Salt and freshly ground
black pepper, to taste |
| 1 garlic clove, minced | 3 cups cooked brown rice |
| ¼ cup minced fresh parsley | ¼ cup freshly grated
Parmesan cheese |
| 2 cups fresh shelled peas | |

In heavy, nonstick skillet, heat oil over medium heat. Add onion, garlic and parsley and sauté about 5 minutes. Add peas and water. Cover and bring to boil, about 1 minute. Turn heat to low and cook until peas are tender, 10-15 minutes. Season with salt and pepper, to taste. Toss peas with cooked rice and top with Parmesan cheese. Serve as side dish.

Makes 10 servings. Per serving: 122 calories, 3 g total fat (<1 g saturated fat), 19 g carbohydrates, 4 g protein, 2 g dietary fiber, 52 mg sodium.

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Research News



Karl J. Mincin
Clinical Nutritionist

Four Locations and
Telephone Consultation

(360) 770-8486
Professional Nutrition Svcs

