



### **Menu Planning for December**

If you're planning your menu for December, there are a few holidays to consider and many fresh fruits and vegetables continuing their summer peak.

#### **Plan for December:**

Full Moon – December 17<sup>th</sup>, Moon before Yule, Long Night or Cold Moon

National 'Hi Neighbor' Month

- December 4<sup>th</sup> - National Cookie Day
- December 5<sup>th</sup> – Hanukkah ends
- December 7<sup>th</sup> – Pearl Harbor Day

- December 21<sup>st</sup> – Winter Solstice
- December 25<sup>th</sup> – Christmas
- December 26<sup>th</sup> – Kwanzaa, Boxing Day, National Whiners Day
- December 27<sup>th</sup> – National Fruitcake Day
- December 31<sup>st</sup> – New Year's Eve

#### **Plan ahead for January:**

Full Moon – January 15<sup>th</sup>

- Known as the 'Old Moon' or Moon after Yule

- January 1<sup>st</sup> – New Year's Day
- January 3<sup>rd</sup> – Fruitcake Toss Day
- January 20<sup>th</sup> – Martin Luther King Jr. Birthday

National Oatmeal Month

National Soup Month

- January 31<sup>st</sup> – Chinese New Year starts – Year of the Horse

**The beginning of the citrus season..... Hardy greens including kales, chicories and spinach. Yummy winter cardoon (cardoni), fennel and roots are also available.**

No matter where you live, winter is the time that our biological clocks encourage us to hunker down, eat more calories and enjoy our sleep. The longest night of the year is Winter Solstice on December 21<sup>st</sup>, after that we begin to swing back towards longer days, inching towards spring. But while we're in the middle of winter, be sure to enjoy the rich and deep flavors that roasting, braising and other slow-cooking, low heat methods can bring to these delicious foods.

Braises, stews, soups and casseroles all benefit from long and low heat cooking styles. Oven roasting slowly converts the internal starches of root vegetables to sweet sugar and even Brussels sprouts, broccoli and cauliflower are better when they're roasted. Balance the flavors and the colors of these roots and brassicas with kales and endives slowly sautéed with a hint of balsamic or citrus for a fresh flavor. As pumpkin fades from availability, think about substituting with a different winter squash; what about red kuri pie or make butternut squash bread instead of pumpkin bread. Be innovative and willing to play with these flavors.

Fruit is amazing this time of year – as long as you love citrus! Grapefruit, oranges, kumquats, lemons, limes all are available and just getting better as the winter progresses. The only challenging variety is the Blood orange – culinarians hold their breath, waiting for the first harvest of lightly pink fruit – usually around Christmas Day. The reason this fruit appears so late is that its' red color is induced by frost temperature cold (below 33° F) and there's a chemical reaction with the naturally occurring *anthocyanin* in the orange. Farmers consider the blood orange season to be February to May (but with the Australian crop, the season can be started early or extended for menus).

Consider using dried fruit to enhance and deepen flavors. Nuts are delicious and when toasted, they are a great way to enhance every menu item and add protein to vegan baking. Beans, freshly dried from the fall harvest, add flavor and a vegetarian protein source to the winter offerings. Enjoy the hearty, rich and deep flavors of the winter season; before you know it, we'll be looking for ramps and fiddleheads again.



**Planning for December:** (**BOLD** below is the peak season and usually more economical.

**Chestnuts**  
Chicory  
Chili Peppers  
Citrus - Grapefruit  
Citrus - Kumquats  
Citrus – Lemons  
Citrus - Limes  
Citrus – Navel Oranges  
Citrus – Oroblanco

**Citrus - Pummelo**  
**Citrus – Satsumas**  
 Citrus – Tangerine  
 Cranberries  
 Cucumbers  
 Endive  
 Escarole  
 Feijoa  
 Fennel  
 Garlic  
 Greens – Chard  
 Greens – Collards  
 Greens – Kale  
 Greens - Rapini  
 Horseradish  
 Jicama  
**Kiwifruit**  
 Kohl Rabi (purple and green)  
**Leeks**  
 Mushroom – Black Trumpet  
 Mushroom – Chanterelle  
 Mushroom – Hedgehog  
 Mushroom – Hon shimiji  
 Mushroom – King Oyster  
 Mushroom – Lobster  
 Mushroom – Matsutake  
 Mushroom – Truffle  
 Nettles, Stinging  
 Onions  
**Onion – Boiler**  
 Onion – Pearl

Papaya  
Parsley Root  
Parsnips  
Pear – Asian  
Pear – Bosc  
Pear – D’Anjou  
Pear – Forelles  
Pear – Seckels  
**Persimmons – Fuyu**  
Persimmons – Hachiya  
Pineapple  
**Pomegranates**  
**Potatoes – Fingerlings**  
Potatoes – Purple  
Potatoes - Russet  
**Potatoes - Sweet**  
Potatoes – Yukon  
Pumpkin  
Quince (ending)  
**Radishes**  
Shallots  
Spinach – Bloomsdale  
**Squash – Hard (winter)**  
**Starfruit (carambola)**  
**Sweet Potatoes**  
Tamarillos  
Tomatillos  
Turnips