

Menu Planning for January 2016

Plan ahead for January:

Full Moon – January 24th

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

- January 1st – New Year's Day
- January 3rd – Fruitcake Toss Day

National Oatmeal Month

National Soup Month

- January 18th – Martin Luther King Jr. Birthday

Plan ahead for February:

Full Moon February 22nd: called the Snow Moon or the Hunger Moon

- February 2nd – Groundhog Day
- February 7th – Super Bowl Sunday
- February 8th – Chinese New Year commences, year of the Monkey
- February 9th – Mardi Gras
- February 10th – Ash Wednesday
- February 14th – St. Valentine's Day (a Sunday)
- February 15th – President's Day (Monday)
- National Grapefruit Month
- Black History Month

New Year's Eve is a Thursday night this year, New Year's Day is a Friday.

In January - citrus season is in full production, hothouse rhubarb begins and baby artichokes should peek through at the end of the month...

Winter officially began on December 22nd and despite the incremental lengthening of each day, we are smack dab in the middle of the darkest part of the year. There are some bright spots to remind us that flavor is available all around us – just not as readily available.

January is the month that hothouse rhubarb returns to the market to seduce us with rich, tart and ever-so-slightly sweet temptations. Baby artichokes should begin to reappear at the Farmer's market after their brief mid-winter gap and the larger chokes should be available but perhaps will be marketed as 'frost-kissed'. The hardy chicories, greens and brassicas that provide our winter fiber and minerals are abundant and delicious. Winter squashes continue to provide beta-carotene to help us stay healthy through the next few months.

The biggest challenges with winter produce are weather and transportation. Most produce comes from California, Florida or what we call 'off-shore' - from Mexico, South and Central America. The added time required for shipping makes planning difficult and patience truly becomes a virtue. Another problematic factor to monitor is the weather, not only in harvest regions, but also in locales where trucks and planes are required to transport to – sunshine in California but snow in Montana or New York often makes for a late – and over-chilled – delivery. Because there are such small harvest geographies in the winter, a regional deluge of rain or frost can wipe out and impact the price of an entire crop of lettuce or citrus. Menus should be written with flexibility and orders should be placed knowing that markets and prices can change with a single storm front.

In January – and all winter long - think about writing menus in a way that's a little more open to variations on the item: winter squashes all taste very similar; cooking greens can all be prepared with similar methods and results; root vegetable medleys are wonderful additions to most menus while keeping a lower cost base. The 'soft' herbs are generally less accessible too – expect to pay premiums for basil, tarragon, chervil and chives – because of their high water content and delicate structures, they are susceptible to frost and cold damage. The winter-hearty herbs are rosemary, thyme and some of the sages – all known as the 'hard' herbs. Use roasted and or smoked tomatoes for an added depth of flavor and citrus juices can brighten up the earthy root flavors that are available. Radishes (both tops and bottoms) make a wonderful addition to salads and spinach and arugula can be used with pears, roasted chanterelles and hedgehog mushrooms to create a delicious seasonal salad course. Tri-coloré salad is a classic Tuscan combination of chicories that mix with lemon juice, olive oil and a cheese; because of their heartiness, all of the chicories can be grilled or roasted and combined for a delicious hearty winter salad.

Remember that the items in **BOLD** will prove to usually be better values as they are in their peak harvest period.

Apples - Braeburn

Apples - Fuji

Apples - Gala

Apples - Lady

Apricots - Chile

Artichokes

Asparagus

Avocados – Calif.

Avocados – Imports

Baby Carrots w/ Tops

Baby Mixed Root Vegetables

Baby Squash

Bananas

Beans - Dragon

Beans - French

Beans – Purple Wax

Beans – Yellow Wax

Beets

Belgian Endive

Broccoli - Cheddar

Broccoli - Purple

Broccoli - Romanesque

Broccoli Rabe

Broccolini

Brussels Sprouts

Cabbage

Cactus Leaves

Cantaloupe – Off Shore

Cardoon

Cauliflower

Celery

Cherries - Chile

Chicory - Castelfranco

Chicory - Frisee

Chicory - Puntarella

Chicory - Treviso

Citrus – Bergamot orange

Citrus – Buddha's Hand

Citrus – Cara Cara

Citrus – Finger Lime

Citrus – Kumquats

Citrus – Mandarin

Citrus – Meyer Lemon

Citrus – Pommelo

Citrus – Satsuma

Citrus – Seville Oranges

Citrus – Tangelo

Cranberries

Eggplant

Endive - Belgian

Grapefruit

Grapes - Chile

Green Beans

Greens - Beet

Greens - Kale

Honeydew – Off Shore

Kiwi

Leeks

Lettuce-Baby (all)

Lettuce-Spring Mix

Mangoes – Brazil

Mushrooms - Chanterelle

Nectarines - Chile

Onions – Spring Sweet

Oranges – Navel

Papaya

Parsnips

Peaches - Chile

Pears

Peas

Persimmons - ending

Pineapple

Plums - Chile

Potatoes - Sweet

Potatoes – Red

Potatoes – Yukon Gold

Radicchio

Radishes - Black

Radishes - Daikon

Radishes - Icicle

Radishes - Watermelon

Rhubarb - hothouse

Root - Burdock

Root - Celery

Root - Horseradish

Root - Lotus

Root - Parsley

Root - Taro

Root - Yucca

Rutabagas

Shallots

Snow Peas

Spinach

Spinach-Baby

Squash - Acorn

Squash - Butternut

Squash - Carnival

Squash - Delicata

Squash - Kabocha

Star Fruit

Strawberries – Calif. new

Sugar Snap Peas

Sun-dried Tomatoes

Turnips