



MEDIA RELEASE
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Light up Christmas with fresh fruit and vegetables

Christmas is the perfect time to enjoy fresh, colourful food with loved ones.

And here in New Zealand Christmas time offers up perfectly themed red, green and white fresh fruit and vegetables. Think of them as nature's Christmas gifts.

5+ A Day suggests taking advantage of the beautiful Christmas-coloured fresh fruit and vegetables available to prepare eye-catching dishes with minimal fuss.

A salad featuring vibrant green asparagus and rich red strawberries offers a festive flavour that is simple to make.

Here are some more delicious ideas using New Zealand Christmas favourites.

Asparagus

Asparagus is a good source of folate, which is important for mental wellbeing. It also contains vitamin C and riboflavin, which helps to regulate metabolism. Look for asparagus with tightly furled, perky tips and straight, strong stalks.

Quick recipe ideas

The tender, sweet taste of asparagus makes it a particularly good vegetable to lightly steam, grill, stir-fry or cook on the barbecue. To prepare, snap off the tough ends. Grilled asparagus makes a quick tasty side dish that's smoky, sweet and simple. Toss the stalks with a little oil before throwing them on the barbecue, and finish with a simple sprinkle of salt and pepper. For a festive salad, arrange baby spinach leaves in a circle on a large platter. Place cooked asparagus spears on top of the spinach along with chopped strawberries. Crumble over feta cheese before serving. For a classic Christmas canape, steam asparagus until tender, then wrap each tip in a slice of Parma ham. Serve with a light citrus dip.

Cherries

Cherries are a good source of vitamin C and are rich in antioxidants. They are also low-GI for longer-lasting energy.

Quick recipe ideas

For a festive salsa, combine pitted and coarsely chopped cherries, one finely chopped small red onion, chopped coriander, a finely chopped fresh chilli and lime juice. Mix and serve with grilled fish or chicken. Add a fruity twist to Christmas Day feasts by adding pitted fresh cherries to chicken, turkey or pork stuffing.

New potatoes

One of the most popular vegetables in New Zealand, potatoes provide 40 percent of the daily recommended dietary intake of vitamin C per serving. The fibre content in potatoes, particularly in the skin, can help to aid healthy digestion.

Quick recipe ideas

Boiled or steamed till tender, new potatoes make a substantial addition to festive salads. For an easy dressing, shake olive oil, Dijon mustard and chopped fresh chives in a jar. For a salad in a bowl layer cooked new potatoes, baby beetroot, spinach leaves, red onion and pumpkin seeds. Drizzle over the dressing. As an accompaniment to the traditional Christmas

roast, lightly coat new potatoes with olive oil and spread on a roasting dish along with freshly cut limes (or lemons), crushed garlic cloves and sprigs of rosemary. Season with cracked pepper and chilli flakes. Roast until crisp and golden. Chop fresh Italian parsley over the potatoes and serve.

Strawberries

Strawberries are a good source of vitamin C and contain dietary fibre, which is good for healthy digestion. They also contain niacin for healthy skin, and potassium, which is good for children's growth and development.

Quick recipe ideas

Delicious simply on their own, strawberries are perfect at any time of the day. For a summery start to your day blend a handful of strawberries with milk or your favourite non-dairy milk, then sweeten to taste with just a touch of pure maple syrup or agave. For a quick no-churn "ice cream" blend frozen banana chunks and fresh strawberries in a food processor until smooth and creamy. This is best eaten the same day, otherwise it will develop ice crystals. For a salad, toss a pile of strawberries with a few tablespoons of balsamic vinegar and some freshly ground black pepper and combine with salad greens. Add a touch of decadence to the quintessential Christmas treat – the chocolate dipped strawberry. Before the chocolate sets, roll the strawberry in finely chopped nuts or coconut. These are best eaten the same day.

Tomatoes

Tomatoes are a good source of vitamin C, a natural antioxidant that prevents free radicals from damaging the body's cells. They also contain vitamin A, important for vision, as well as potassium, which plays a role in maintaining nerve health.

Quick recipe ideas

For a colourful Christmas-themed salad using New Zealand-grown tomatoes, try a caprese salad. Thinly slice large red tomatoes and arrange on a plate. Tear up mozzarella cheese and layer with the tomatoes. Top with fresh basil leaves. Drizzle over olive oil and a sprinkling of salt and pepper for seasoning. Tomatoes take on an intensely deep flavour after roasting and can be used in many different ways. Put tomatoes on a baking sheet with sliced garlic and thyme, and drizzle over olive oil. Add seasoning and roast for one hour. Arrange mesclun salad greens on a platter and place roasted tomatoes on top. Finish with a homemade dressing.

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About the 5+ A Day Charitable Trust

The 5+ A Day Charitable Trust was formed in 2007 for the benefit of the general public and specifically the children of New Zealand. The Trust is committed to increasing the consumption of fresh fruit and vegetables for better health in all New Zealanders. 5+ A Day focuses its work in the education setting. Curriculum-linked resources promoting awareness, understanding and knowledge of the importance of eating 5+ A Day are produced and distributed free to educators.

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