



Rady Children's Hospital Clinical Nutrition Department Fall 2021

# Nutrition News

## A Look Inside

Curious about new alternative pastas on the market or the truth behind claims for mushroom supplements? This edition of Nutrition News breaks down those questions plus discusses fall produce, a time saving meal prep app, handling Halloween candy with kids and, of course, delicious recipes. Grab a pumpkin spiced latte or your favorite fall beverage to sip while you read and enjoy!



## "Fall" in Love with Butternut Squash

*Samme Fuchs, RDN, CNSC, CLEC*

Nothing says fall like changing leaves, Halloween costumes and...butternut squash! This super squash is full of flavor and nutrition and is sure to brighten any meal. It is in the same botanical family, the cucurbitaceae family, as gourds and pumpkins. We generally think of it as a vegetable, but it is technically a fruit. It has a firm, pale orange or buff-colored skin and bright orange, firm flesh that is in season during fall and winter, but is available in San Diego to enjoy year-round.

Butternut squash is high in beneficial nutrients, particularly beta-carotene, which we convert to vitamin A. Vitamin A plays a role in eye health and cell renewal. A single serving (1 cup, cubed) of butternut squash provides more than 100% of the daily requirement of vitamin A for adult men and women. Butternut squash is also a great source of vitamin C, and a good source of thiamin, niacin, vitamin B6, folate, pantothenic acid, and fiber.

Choose firm squash with smooth, buff-colored skin, a smallish "ball end" and a thick neck. The older large varieties of butternut squash are more flavorful than the newer smaller breeds. Store your fresh, uncut squash in a cool, dark place. Under proper storage conditions, your squash should last up to two to three months.

Butternut squash is versatile and lends a full-bodied, sweet, nutty flavor. It works well with just about every cooking method including boiling, baking, roasting, or pan frying. It pairs well with many flavorings, including citrus, balsamic vinegar, sharp cheeses, and herbs. It can be added to soup, stews, risotto, pasta and so much more.

Want to grow your own? It's definitely doable in the San Diego region, but requires a little patience, as fruit maturation takes approximately 110-120 days. For detailed information on how to grow your own butternut squash, visit the San Diego County Master Gardener Association website:

<https://www.mastergardenersd.org>.

## Prized Persimmons

Alissa Herrera, RD

In the United States, persimmons are often overshadowed by the other fall fruits, but they are delicious and nutritious. Key nutrients include fiber, vitamin A, vitamin C, vitamin E, thiamin (vitamin B1), riboflavin (vitamin B2), folate, potassium, manganese, and magnesium. Persimmons are rich in antioxidants, and anti-inflammatory properties that may protect against chronic diseases.

Persimmons are of the genus *Diospyros*, which in Greek means "divine food" or "fruit of the gods." The trees grow to about 25 feet tall. The persimmon is a native fruit to China and is the national fruit of Japan. The fruit is available in San Diego from late October through December. In the United States, there are two types that are currently grown on a commercial scale: the astringent Hachiya and the non-astringent fuyu. They are different in their shape and texture but both offer beneficial nutrients.

### Fuyu Persimmon

The non-astringent Fuyu persimmon contains less tannin than the Hachiya and can be eaten while it is crispy, like an apple. It can be eaten with the skin or peeled. If left at room temperature, Fuyus will gradually soften. With their mildly sweet, cinnamon-laced flavor, they are best eaten out of hand or tossed in salads and salsas. Non-astringent varieties have short shelf span and can be stored for only a few days at room temperature.



### Hachiya Persimmon

Astringent variety persimmon fruits generally harvested while they are hard but fully matured and they ripen at room temperature. The astringent taste of the Hachiya will disappear as it becomes ripe and soft, advised to eat when at a jelly-like consistency. To speed the ripening process, place the fruit in a paper bag with a banana, which will release ethylene, the gas that promotes ripening. Once ripe, it should be eaten within a few days, or placed in the refrigerator. Mature, hard, astringent persimmons can be stored in the refrigerator for several months. Hachiyas can add great flavor to baked goods such as muffins and breads. They can be dried to snack on or pureed and used as a sauce for ice cream or pancakes.



## Sensational Sprouts

Sierra Mirvis, RD, CNSC, CLEC

Brussel sprouts can be found all year long but their primary season is fall. They are named after their popularity and suspected place of origin, Brussels, Belgium. Brussel sprouts should be planted six to ten weeks prior to the first frost in an area that gets full sun and has rich soil.

Brussel sprouts are part of the cruciferous vegetable family which also includes cauliflower, kale, and cabbage. Cruciferous vegetables contain chemical components known as glucosinolates that have anti-inflammatory effects and diets rich in these foods may decrease the risk of cancer. Brussel sprouts are very nutrient dense, per cup they contain: 38 kcal, 0.3 g fat, 3 g pro, 3.3 g fiber, and 124% daily value of vitamin C.

There are multiple ways Brussel sprouts can be prepared, but roasting is one of the most popular and delicious. Remove any discolored leaves and cut larger sprouts into halves. Place on a baking sheet and toss with a small amount of olive oil, salt and pepper and roast in the oven for 20-25 minutes at 400 F. Enjoy!



## Pumpkin Power

Lora Beaston, RD, CSP, IBCLC

Pumpkins are associated with fall from the spicy pumpkin pie aroma during Thanksgiving to the grinning jack-o'-lantern shining on our porch on Halloween night. This bright orange squash come in many varieties from the larger Jack-O-Lantern pumpkin which is a carving pumpkin with stringy flesh to the flavorful cooking varieties. Choose the smaller, round sugar or pie pumpkins which are packed with flavor to make pies or puree for many dishes.

Pumpkins are high in carotenoids like beta carotene, which provides the bright orange color. Your body changes beta carotene into vitamin A which is needed for healthy skin and eyes. Pumpkin is also an excellent source of vitamin C which can positively affect immunity and enhance iron absorption. Pumpkins also contain potassium which is needed for proper functioning of nervous system and muscles. Pumpkins contain several antioxidants which may protect your cells from free radical damage. A recent study found roasting pumpkin seeds at 160°C versus higher temperatures improved total flavonoids, and antioxidant properties.

Pumpkins have a long shelf life and can keep for months at a cool room temperature, the puree may be frozen for up to 3 months, and if refrigerated the puree should be used within five to seven days. Incorporate pumpkin into your meals by blending the puree into stews, stir into your oatmeal or mac and cheese to boost the nutrient content, or even use pumpkin puree to replace up to one third of butter in baked goods. Roasted seeds make a simple snack or a way to add crunch to yogurt or trail mix. For additional fun facts on pumpkins visit:

<https://www.sciencekids.co.nz/sciencefacts/food/pumpkins.html>



# Fungi – Health Fad or Health Food?

Janet Salvador, RD, CLEC

Mushrooms have been used for centuries, including in the Greek and Asian cultures, as home health remedies and have increased in popularity over the last 10 years. Mushrooms can be found in a multitude of products from powder blends in coffee, tea and smoothies, and even in extracts used in shower gel and face creams. Mushrooms have also increased in popularity as supplements touting to provide benefits of increased energy, anti-inflammation, and immune support. But is there any truth in their claims?

Researchers agree that mushrooms do provide benefits in supporting good health. Mushrooms are low in calories with one cup providing 16 calories and they are rich in protein and fiber. They provide moderate amounts of B vitamins, potassium, copper, selenium, and have high amounts of antioxidants which protect cells from damage that may increase risk of cancer and heart disease. Wild mushrooms specifically have a unique ability like humans, to convert ultraviolet light from the sun to vitamin D which is essential for bone health.

Evidenced based research regarding quantitative amounts of mushrooms needed beneficial effects is limited. Additional research needed to determine if mushrooms can help with cancer prevention, wound healing and immune support. Currently, the FDA will only allow general claims such as mushrooms have antioxidant properties or mushrooms support the immune system and general health.

Researchers suggest if you plan to use mushroom supplements instead of cultivated wild ones, that we look for organizations that use certified labs: ConsumerLab.com, NSF International, US Pharmacopeia (USP) or UL which can provide an assurance of ingredients and that the supplement is free from harmful contaminants.

Based on current analysis, mushrooms can provide a healthy source of nutrition as part of a balanced diet. With regards to supplementation, general guidelines suggest moderation and, as always, be sure to discuss the risk/benefits with your health provider. They can help guide you and give you advice regarding the type and dose of the supplement you plan to use and help determine your individual benefits.



## Pasta with Brie, Mushrooms, and Arugula

Emily Bhattacharjee, MS, RD, CLEC

Yield: 6 servings

Ingredients:

12 oz penne (can use lentil-based pasta for more protein and fiber)  
1 tablespoon olive oil  
1 pound button mushrooms, quartered  
1 small red onion  
½ cup dry white wine  
Kosher salt and black pepper  
8 oz Brie, cut into 1-inch pieces  
4 cups baby arugula (or any baby leafy green)

Directions:

1. Cook pasta according to package directions. Reserve ½ cup of the cooking water, drain the pasta and return it to the pot.
2. While the pasta is cooking, heat olive oil in a large skillet over medium-high heat.
3. Add the mushrooms and onions. Cook, stirring occasionally until mushrooms begin to release their juices, about two to three minutes.
4. Add the wine, ½ teaspoon salt, ¼ teaspoon pepper and mix until mushrooms begin to brown about five or six minutes.
5. Toss pasta with Brie and reserved cooking water until the cheese coats the pasta. Stir in the mushrooms, onions, and arugula.

Nutrition Information: 410 calories, 16 g protein, 1 g dietary fiber, 410 mg sodium, 352 mg potassium, 0 mcg vitamin D, 128 mg Calcium, 3 mg Iron

Adapted from:

<https://www.realsimple.com/food-recipes/browse-all-recipes/pasta-with-brie-mushrooms-arugula-recipe>

# Halloween Candy Dilemma

L Boerner, MPH, RD, IBCLC



Halloween is a busy and fun time but can be stressful for parents as they are navigating the abundance of candy and treats surrounding children. If parents take too much control and set very restrictive limits on what their child can eat, it often results in a power struggle. Ellyn Satter, MS, RD, LCSW, BCD has some excellent advice on the best ways to deal with Halloween candy and still enjoy the event. In Satter's "Division of Responsibility" model, parents are responsible for providing a variety of foods including age-appropriate healthy meals and snacks. Parents should provide structured times for eating and control "where" food is eaten. The child decides "what" and "how much" they eat and ideally will listen to their hunger and fullness cues. Her advice is to trust kids to trust themselves on how to deal with the candy.

Plan the trick-or-treat outing after a nutritious meal so they will not be hungry and overdo it with the candy. Afterwards, let them have access to the candy. If it is hidden, they tend to load up on it or seek out candy at friends' houses, even when they are not hungry. If the child cannot reasonably manage their candy intake, then parents may need to take increased control until they can reasonably manage their treats.

# Tech Corner: Mealime

Shanna Miller Nabas, RD

Mealime is an absolute timesaver if you are looking for an app that combines meal planning, grocery shopping, and instructional recipes into one easy place. The app is free to download and available via Apple Store and Google Play. While you can easily use the app without purchasing anything, upgrading to Mealime gives access to exclusive recipes, nutrition information, and allows the user to upload your own recipes.

Once you download the app, you begin building a meal plan by browsing and selecting from a plethora of recipes. Once the desired recipes are selected, you can choose between two, four, or six servings for each recipe (which is great for those who want to try out a recipe). Mealime will automatically compile a grocery list with the list of all ingredients you need.



For those with specific food preferences, allergies, or dietary restrictions, Mealime allows you to enter these to help filter out unwanted ingredients. You can search for meals that are inexpensive and budget-friendly. The user also has options

to choose recipes that may fit into some diet categories (i.e. vegetarian, vegan). For popular diets like paleo and keto that do not always have clear-cut definitions, I do appreciate how Mealime clarifies what they used to define these diet parameters for those who are interested.

Mealime's recipes are generally well-balanced and incorporate a protein source, fruit(s) or vegetable(s), and starch/grain (except when intentionally excluded for the low carb recipes). The portion sizes are generous and very filling as well. While I haven't run into many recipes I've disliked, you can rate each recipe, provide feedback to the chef, and favorite your recipes.

All-in-all, the Mealime app is a convenient way to plan meals and grocery list with less effort. It is great for those who are trying to cook at home more often but may not have the time to sit down and plan new meals every week. At the risk of sounding like a saleswoman, since it's free in the app store I would consider it a low-risk investment with delicious payoff.

## Substitutions & Modifications

This recipe is wonderfully versatile. Try some substitutions or modifications to fit your preferences:

- Pumpkin: the kabocha squash (Japanese pumpkin) used in this recipe can be swapped for a different winter squash. Try it with butternut squash, any winter squash will work or try sweet potato.
- Vegetables: have different vegetables on hand or use up the ones in the fridge. Feel free to throw them in the curry.
- Protein: tofu works in this recipe but it would also taste great with other protein options. Shrimp, chicken, or chickpeas would all add texture and taste.
- Rice: try serving this curry recipe over brown rice, white rice, or cauliflower rice.

## Tofu Pumpkin Curry

Lisa Ameer, MSNH, RD, CDE



Servings: 3  
Prep time: 15 mins  
Cook time: 20 mins

### INGREDIENTS

- 1 1/2 Tablespoon olive or avocado oil
- 1/2 red onion, chopped
- 1 yellow bell pepper, chopped
- 3 cloves garlic, minced
- 3 teaspoon minced/grated ginger (Target has grated ginger frozen in 1 tsp cubes)
- 3 Tablespoons red curry paste (try Thai Kitchen or Trader Joe's brands)
- 1 14 oz can coconut milk
- 1 cup water or veggie broth
- 1 teaspoon salt/pepper
- 2 cups peeled and chopped pumpkin (consider kabocha squash )
- 16 oz extra firm tofu drained overnight, pressed and chopped into bite size chunks
- 5 oz baby greens or baby spinach
- fresh basil, limes and cashews (3/4 cup cashews) to garnish
- white/brown or cauliflower rice, for serving. You choose!

### INSTRUCTIONS

1. Heat the oil in a skillet over medium heat. Add onion, bell pepper, ginger and garlic and cook, stirring, until fragrant, about three minutes. Stir in the curry paste and tofu, toss and sauté for another two minutes.
2. Add the pumpkin, coconut milk, water, salt, and pepper and stir to combine. Bring the mixture to a simmer, cover, and cook until the pumpkin is tender and cooked through, about 15 minutes.
3. Stir in the baby greens and cook until just wilted, 1 to 2 minutes.
4. Remove from the heat and stir in the lime juice. Serve warm, over rice.

### NUTRITION Facts per serving:

Serving: 1/3 of recipe about 1.5 cups without rice  
Calories: 354 Carbohydrates: 38g Protein: 19g  
Fat: 17g Saturated Fat: 5g Polyunsaturated Fat: 12g  
Sodium: 1366mg Fiber: 6g Sugar: 10g

\*Adapted from Eating Bird Food by Brittany Mullins (eatingbirdfood.com)

# Pasta Vs. Pasta

Nicole Bloch, RD

Love pasta, but want to get more bang-for-your-calorie-buck or trying to increase your dietary fiber? The good news is if you are interested in trying something new there are many different types of alternative pasta (alt-pasta). Not only are the alt-pastas tast, they provide more protein, fiber, and micronutrients than traditional wheat pasta. We reviewed three non-wheat pastas and compared them to classic semolina wheat pasta.

Pasta	Ease of Prep (1-5)	Flavor Profile/Taste (1-5)	Texture (1-5)	Odor (1-5)	Calories/serving (2 oz)	Grams of Protein/serving (2 oz)	Grams of Fiber/serving (2 oz)
Standard Semolina Wheat	5	5	5	5	200	7	3
Brown Rice Quinoa	5	5	4	5	200	5	2
Black Bean	5	2	1	2	200	14	15
Green Lentil, Cauliflower, and Parsnip	4	3	3	3	200	15	4

**Key:** 1 most difficult/least favorable and 5 easiest/most favorable

**Best Choice Overall:** Cybele’s Green Lentil, Cauliflower, and Parsnip pasta. The flavor was mild and had a hint of taste of root vegetable, but not noticeable with tomato basil sauce and cheese. It also has a significant amount of plant-based protein and a good amount of fiber. Try incorporating additional vegetables – either wilted greens or sauteed bell peppers which is a great addition for any pasta or pizza.

**Flaws, but not deal-breakers:** Black bean pasta is high in protein, fiber, and iron. However, this pasta tastes like beans and was hard to cover up with a sauce and honestly, did not satisfy as a pasta dish. Perhaps if using seasonings other than tomato and basil, this would have been more palatable. It was also the mushiest after cooking, turning into more of a paste than a pasta.

**Who should buy alt-pastas?** Alt-pastas are a good choice for those looking to explore in the kitchen. They can also be a great choice for those looking to increase their fiber intake, protein intake, or manage their blood sugars. The pastas we tested had the same number of calories per 2 oz serving, so are not to be considered a diet food.

**How we tested the pastas:** All pastas were cooked per instructions on their respective packages. Most took seven to ten minutes, but some would have benefited from the lower range of that cook time, particularly the black bean pasta. The green lentil pasta required rinsing with warm water after cooking which dropped the ease of prep score a bit. We tried the pasta without the rinse and the result was gummy noodles. After rinsing, the noodles had more of an “al dente” texture and the gumminess was gone.

**Final thoughts:** At the end of the day, if you enjoy regular, classic wheat pasta – go for it. For those who cannot tolerate wheat, the brown rice and quinoa pasta is the next tastiest choice. Although not tested for this round, pasta made from chickpea also has a mild flavor, great texture, and good nutrition profile as far as protein and fiber are concerned. In summary, honor your hunger cues, be mindful of portions, follow a medical diet if your dietitian or physician prescribed it to you but most of all you eat what you love as part of a balance diet.

