What To Eat Now: February

Spring is on its way ... but what to eat in the meantime? In February, keep your eye out for fresh kale, spring onions, grapefruit, kiwi, and kumquats.

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Much of the U.S. is still cold and snowy in February; let your local supermarket's winter bounty carry you through the final months of the season. Hardy winter kale continues to appear in fine form across the country, while citrus fruits like grapefruit and its wee relative, the kumquat, are hitting their stride. California kiwis are in fine furry fettle, and the very first heralds of spring — scallions and spring onions — are starting to make an appearance in the Southern states. Here's what to know about these heroes of cold February — and more importantly, what to cook with them!

Kale

Oh, kale… Over-hyped, under-appreciated, and *always* sure to draw out strong opinions. Good thing this is one tough vegetable. Kale actually thrives in the winter, with a good hard frost producing sweeter and more tender greens. The hardiest variety of the bunch is the winterbor, most often sold simply as "curly kale." Two other common varieties include lacinato kale — also called cavolo nero, or more strikingly, "dinosaur kale" — which is the common flat-leaf kale, and baby kale, whose small leaves often show up in salad mixes and batches of juicing greens. True connoisseurs will keep their eye out for the all-purple redbor variety or the red-stemmed red russian. All of these varieties have what it takes to last through the winter, and stand up to the February chill.

But isn't "tough" a *bad* thing when it comes to something you have to chew? This is where it pays to know the best way to cook your greens. Cooking kale slow and long (as in the slow cooker soup recipe in the collection below) will help to soften it up, and removing the thick, crunchy inner rib from each leaf is a must as well. If serving raw, kale can be massaged with olive oil to help tenderize it.

When selecting your kale, look for crisp leaves without any wilting, and avoid bunches with any yellow or brown spots. It should keep for about a week stored in the coldest part of the fridge (like its natural habitat!) — but keep it away from apples, which give off a compound that will make the kale go bad faster.

Easy Kale Chips

GO TO RECIPE ›

Easy Kale Chip

VINTAGE MIXER

★★★★★

View Recipe Yum

Spaghetti Carbonara With Kale and P…

A SIMPLE PANTRY

★★★★☆

Kale Brussel Sprouts Salad

IT IS A KEEPER

★★★★★

Chickpea and Kale Thai Coconut Curry

AVERIE COOKS

★★★★★

Kale & Garlic Frittata

FOOD WITH FEELING

★★★★☆

Fiery Kale With Garlic and Olive Oil

THE KITCHN

★★★★½

Slow Cooker Tomato, Kale and Quinoa…

DAMN DELICIOUS

★★★★☆

Spring Onions

Spring onions have all the classic hallmarks of early-year produce: small, delicate, and sporting a mild, sweet flavor. The term "spring onion" can cause some confusion, as Canadians and Brits use the phrase to describe what we know in the States as scallions (which are also called green onions by all anglophones). Spring onions and green onions come from the same family, known as "bunching onions," with spring onions being allowed to form a small bulb before harvesting.

Spring onions can be found in both red and white varieties. While spring onions are generally milder and sweeter than regular onions, the greens are stronger than scallions, and will impart a much different flavor if used to replace scallions in recipes. Their sweetness can be coaxed out by a simple grilled preparation, and they pair well with other early spring vegetables such as asparagus and peas. Unlike mature onions, they should be stored in the refrigerator, where they'll keep for about a week.

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Grilled Asparagus and Spring Onions with Lemon Dressing

BON APPÉTIT

View Recipe

Grilled Flatbreads With Red Spring…

GRAB A PLATE

Spring Onion Risotto

PBS

Butter-Braised Spring Onions with L…

BON APPÉTIT

Spring Onion Asparagus Frittata

LOVE AND LEMONS

Spring Onion and Sherry Vinegar Jam

TASTING TABLE

Italian Spring Onion Frittelle

KANNAMMA COOKS

★★★★☆

Grapefruit

Grapefruits are here to give you the extra dose of vitamin C you need to chase away your lingering winter cold. Less sweet than oranges and less bitter than lemons, grapefruits work equally well tempered with sweet ingredients or as a tart foil for gentle herbs and spring produce. They can simply be juiced, cut in half and eaten with a spoon, or used to brighten up a homemade vinaigrette.

Available in white, pink, or ruby varieties, with or without seeds, grapefruits should be fairly heavy for their size when ripe. Unlike other fruits, citrus doesn't continue to ripen once picked, so choose well! If using the rind (as in the lovely grapefruit marmalade below), consider choosing organic-grown fruit, and wash the outside well either way prior to use. Grapefruits can be stored in the refrigerator for two weeks or more, and will last a week left at room temperature.

GO TO RECIPE >

Broiled Grapefruit

A NERD COOKS

★★★★★

View Recipe   Yum

Salad with Pink Grapefruit & Avocado

COOKING WEEKENDS

★★★★☆

Ruby Red Grapefruit & Orange Marmal…

THE CAFÉ SUCRÉ FARINE

Grapefruit Yogurt Cake

THE LEAN GREEN BEAN

★★★★★

Greyhound Cocktail

GARNISH WITH LEMON

Healthier Grapefruit Breakfast Doug…

KITCHEN SANCTUARY

Grapefruit Mint Sorbet

OLEANDER AND PALM

Kiwi

California kiwi season is in full swing, so look for the fresh fruits at your local supermarket. While most of us are familiar with the green Hayward variety, if you live in a kiwi-growing area, keep your eyes peeled for the rarer golden kiwi, with its fuzzless peel and short harvest window. Speaking of the peel, did you know that kiwi peels are fully edible? If you want to leave the skins on when slicing, go for it; you can gently scrape off any fuzz with a spoon to improve the texture.

Ripe kiwis won't be hard, but shouldn't be mushy either; they'll keep for several weeks if kept refrigerated. Kiwis lend themselves to cold preparations like sorbets, fruit pops, and frozen fruit drinks — check out the collection below for a kiwi soda recipe! Their bright green color and starburst display of tiny black seeds also make them excellent for adding a decorative touch to desserts.

GO TO RECIPE >

Mango Kiwi Pineapple Protein Pops

CAPTURING JOY WITH KRISTEN DUKE

View Recipe

Kiwi Soda

CHOWHOUND.COM

★★★★★

Blackberry Kiwi Mini Pavlova

COOKING LSL

Kiwi & Lime Slice

KIDS EAT BY SHANAI

Kiwi Sorbet

SEARCHING FOR SPICE

Blueberry Kiwi Slushies

DIETHOOD

Chia Seed Blueberry Kiwi Probiotic…

SKINNY OVER 40

Market Standout: Kumquats

What *are* kumquats? And what do you do with them? If you've never tried them before, make it a first this February.

Kumquats are a unique member of the citrus family, diminutive in size with a sweet skin and sour interior. The most common varieties found in the US are nagami, which can be fairly tart, and less frequently found, the meiwa. Hybrids like mandarinquats and limequats (which are exactly what they sound like) can also be found in local markets.

With its thin and flavorful rind, kumquats should be eaten whole; a fresh kumquat will be firm and burst in your mouth when biting into it. Because the fleshy insides do tend towards sour, a favorite preparation is to candy whole kumquats. They're excellent paired with other citrus fruits in marmalades and chutneys, and can be used to add an acidic punch to baked goods as well.

GO TO RECIPE ›

Chocolate Dipped Candied Kumquats

THE TASTE OF KOSHER

View Recipe

Kumquat Chicken Skillet

THE ADVENTURE BITE

Cardamom Kumquat Bars

FAMILY SPICE

Tea Tattler

Spiced Kumquat Nut Bread with Gold…

TEA TATTLER

★★★★★

Kumquat Habanero Marmalade

LOCAL KITCHEN

Kumquat Chutney

BAKING SENSE

Kumquat Salsa

SIMPLY RECIPES

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