What to Eat Now: June

As summer begins, the farmers' markets are overflowing! Stone fruits, avocados, new potatoes, garlic scapes, and berries are all at their peak.

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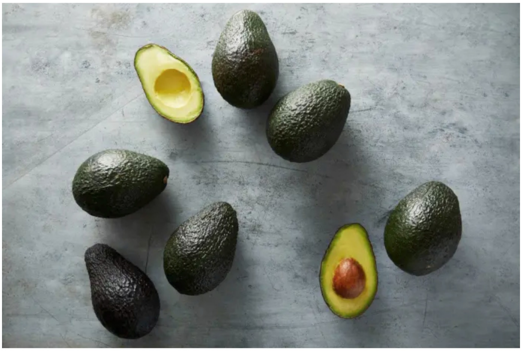
Things are finally heating up in much of the United States, bringing a bounty of fruits and vegetables to supermarkets around the country. With stone fruits and avocados in fine form, you'll be sure to get practice removing pits this June. You won't find new potatoes or garlic scapes in the supermarket, however, so there's two good reasons to visit your local farmer's market right there, no matter where you live! Here's a look at the pick of June, with plenty of recipe ideas to get you started.

Avocados



Where to begin with avocados? A hipster joke about overpriced urban toasts? Debating whether the avocado truly IS the healthiest food on earth? How about starting here: They're delicious. Buttery, rich, and full of healthy fats — but simultaneously fresh, clean, and light — avocados have earned their popularity. Equally at home as the star of a dish, a vessel for stuffing, or as a base for creamy sauce substitutes, the avocado is eminently flexible.

Buying and storing avocados

While there are several different varieties of avocados, the dark-skinned Haas avocado, developed in California in the 1930s, is the most common by far. Other well-known cultivars include the green-skinned Bacon, Fuerte, and Zutano. And while, yes, we do often rely on imported avocados from Mexico, the California crop is now in season, so look for these domestically grown treats in your markets now. Just look for the "California grown" sticker on the produce, or, if you live on the West Coast, get yourself to the nearest farmers' market.

Notably, the avocado does not ripen on the tree, but only ripens *after* it's picked — so if you get a perfectly ripe avocado at the market, this is actually a sign that it's older than its hardened peers! Avocados should be stored at room temperature on the counter to allow them to ripen; a fully ripe avocado will give a little when you press on it (but shouldn't show any signs of mold, or give way completely). Once ripe, you can extend the life of the avocado by storing it in the refrigerator for 2-3 days.

Preparing avocados

It's recommended that you wash your avocado before slicing it — even though you won't use the tough outer skin, it's known to harbor bacteria that can be transferred to the edible flesh by the knife when you cut into it.

And speaking of cutting, do be careful when you do it! Enough people injure themselves trying to remove the pit that there's a name for it: "avocado hand." DO NOT hold the avocado in one hand and forcefully attack the pit with a knife in the other — there's too much risk of the knife slipping through the tender avocado and into your tender palm.

Instead, begin first by slicing the avocado lengthwise around the pit, then gently twist the two halves apart. The pit will stay stuck in one of these halves. To get the pit out, the safest bet is to use a soup spoon to gently scoop it out. You can also place the half with the pit on a cutting board, reach for a large knife, and give the pit a quick, hard rap with the knife blade. Done properly, the pit will cling to the blade, which you can then twist gently to ease the pit out of the fruit.

Beat the brown scourge

As any avocado aficionado will tell you, once you cut it open, the battle against browning begins. Air is the enemy here, so wrapping it airtight — or better yet, submerging in a neutral oil — is your best bet to keep the brown spots at bay. Applying an acid such as lemon or lime juice can also delay the development of brown spots. Or do like I do, and just slice up the unused pieces and eat them out of hand while they're still nice and fresh. No guilt with this healthy treat!

GO TO RECIPE >

Guacamole

CARRIE'S EXPERIMENTAL KITCHEN

★★★★½

View Recipe

Yum

Avocado Fries

OLIVIA'S CUISINE

★★★★★

Baked Seafood Stuffed Avocados

RANTS FROM MY CRAZY...

★★★★☆

Avocado Popsicles

THE LITTLE EPICUREAN

Fresh Fig and Avocado Grilled Cheese

YUMMY MUMMY KITCHEN

★★★★☆

Deliciously Rich Avocado Brownies

ONE HUNGRY BUNNY

★★★★½

Avocado Toast

CATHY'S GLUTEN FREE

★★★★½

Garlic Scapes

If you're a garlic lover and haven't tried cooking with garlic scapes, get thee to a farmer's market, stat! While the serpentine greens don't appear to have much in common with garlic, they are in fact just a different part of the same plant. Garlic plant varieties are classified as either softneck or hardneck; garlic *scapes* only grow out of hardneck varieties.

But hold up. What exactly *is* a "garlic scape," again? It's not the view out your car window as you drive through Gilroy, CA (the garlic capital of the U.S.); instead, it's a green shoot from the garlic plant. The bulbs we typically use in cooking grow underground, with green shoots (the garlic scapes) growing out of the bulb and ending in a pointy flower bud. Garlic scapes appear shortly before the garlic bulb itself is ready to be harvested, and are frequently removed and sold at markets so as not to divert any energy away from the growing bulbs.

Garlic scapes are quite hardy and can last for three weeks or more in the refrigerator after being harvested. And if you love the soft scent of garlic wafting through the house, they make dramatic additions to floral bouquets!

While the scapes are garlicky by nature, it's not the exact same flavor you'd get from a garlic clove. Unsurprisingly, perhaps, the taste is a bit milder and less assertive. The older the scape, the more fibrous it becomes, so be prepared to chop or puree the scapes before using, as you'll see in many of the recipes below. The flowers and ends should be trimmed off altogether before doing so.

GO TO RECIPE ›

Roasted Garlic Scapes (Spears)

CHOCOLATE AND MARROW

View Recipe

Cold Garlic Scape Potato Soup (Vich…

JUST A LITTLE BIT OF BA…

Garlic Scape and Cherry Tomato Pasta

SAVEUR

Summer Garlic Scape Pesto

WELL AND FULL

Garlic Scape Dal

LOVE IS IN MY TUMMY

Garlic Scape Pancakes

PBS

Garlic Scape Aioli (Mayo)

SIMPLE SEASONAL

New Potatoes

Potatoes may not be the first thing that comes to mind when you think of late spring, but the first potatoes of the season are something not to be missed. Potatoes are tubers in the nightshade family (yes, along with tomatoes, peppers, and eggplants). And while we often associate potatoes with European countries (Irish potato fields, Russian potato vodka, the classic Spanish tapas of *patatas bravas* … the list goes on), the potato originated in South America and didn't appear in Europe until Spanish explorers brought them back East.

New potatoes are not a specific variety of potato (so no, they're not the same thing as a red potato, fingerling potato, or other variety that's characteristically small in size). Instead, they're just early season tubers of *any* variety that have been harvested before they reach maturity. Typically, you'll only find new potatoes at farmers' markets.

Because new potatoes are lower in starch, you're not going to want to use them for mashed potatoes, but they'll truly shine when boiled or roasted. Better yet? The papery young skins don't need to be peeled. When choosing any potato, try to avoid green or black spots or the any early-stage sprouts (although all of these can simply be cut off if the rest of the potato looks OK). All potatoes should be stored in a cool dark place; however, unlike older storage potatoes, new potatoes should be eaten within a couple of days of purchase.

To prepare new potatoes, simply give them a quick scrub — but wait to do so until you're ready to cook them, as washing in advance can hasten deterioration. If boiling, add the potatoes to cold water and then heat the water and potatoes together to avoid unevenly cooked potatoes; adding them to already boiling water will cook the outsides more quickly than the insides.

GO TO RECIPE >

Crispy Curried New Potatoes

CHOWHOUND.COM

View Recipe

Pasta with Snow Peas and New Potato…

HOLY COW! VEGAN REC…

Roasted New Potato Salad with Lenti…

OCCASIONALLY EGGS

New Potato, Caramelised Onion, Rose…

DOMESTIC GOTHESS

Cuban Picadillo

PORK

★★★★☆

Sheet Pan Chicken with Asparagus an…

SIMPLY RECIPES

Spring Peas with New Potatoes, Herb…

FOOD AND WINE

★★☆☆☆

Blackberries & Raspberries

You may see blackberries starting to appear at markets this time of year, but no need to rush — this is just the very beginning of the season in Southern growing areas, and they'll continue to ripen and produce well into the summer. Interestingly, as blackberries ripen and start to turn from sour to sweet, they lose some of the shine on their skin. So, sometimes, all that glitters is not … ripe. Like most berries, blackberries don't keep for long in the fridge, but they are perfect for freezing or canning. Their signature sweet but sour flavor makes them a natural pairing for desserts with buttery crusts and an accent of lemon.

GO TO RECIPE >

Blackberry Lemon Pavlova

BAKING A MOMENT

View Recipe

Blackberry-Almond Clafoutis

KITCHEN AT HOSKINS

Easy No Bake Blackberry Tart

A SIMPLE PANTRY

Blackberry-Almond Rolls

TUTTI DOLCI

Blackberry Bars

NUM'S THE WORD

★★★★☆

Homemade Blackberry Syrup

DARING GOURMET

★★★★★

Blackberry & Custard Doughnuts

DONAL SKEHAN

Like blackberries, June is the beginning of the season for raspberries as well, depending on where you live. While the bulk of the nation's raspberries come from the Pacific Northwest, the berry grows well around the country, so if you can search out a local grower, it's worth your while. Be extra careful of mold when choosing raspberries, as they're susceptible; as such, don't expect to store them for long before they go bad. Your best bet to determine if the raspberries are ripe? Give one a taste, if you can! The berries should be neither overly sour nor musty. Again, with their short lifespan, raspberries are excellent candidates for freezing to capture them at just the right state of ripeness and preserve them for the winter months to come.

GO TO RECIPE >

Raspberry Mousse

EL INVITADO DE INVIERNO

★★★★☆

View Recipe

Crispy Raspberry Oats

THE GREEN CREATOR

Raspberry Balsamic Chicken

THE ROASTED ROOT

Homemade Raspberry Vinaigrette Dres…

730 SAGE STREET

★★★★½

Raspberry Pistachio Magic Bars

BEACH HOUSE KITCHEN

Raspberry Macarons

MOM LOVES BAKING

★★★★☆

Keto Cobbler

CAST IRON KETO

★★★★★

Stone Fruits

Stone fruits, biologically known as drupes, are a true hallmark of summer. The stone, or pit, is used to classify two main types of stone fruits: clingstones, where the flesh sticks, or "clings" to the pits, common in several varieties of peaches; and freestone, such as apricots, where the pit easily separates from the fruit. While peaches, plums, apricots, and nectarines are the most well-known stone fruits, there are many other popular foods in the category, including cherries, olives, and even almonds.

Cherries

June is the best time of year for that perennial favorite: cherries. The little ruby orbs mark the beginning of stone fruit season, with young apricots nipping at their heels.

Cherry varieties are divided up into two groups: sweet and sour. Sweet cherries are more likely to be negatively affected by late spring rains, as they were in California this year. Sour cherries are a bit more resilient, and many cross-bred varieties reap the benefits of both types. In fact, there are over a *thousand* different varieties of cherries, so you most certainly have your pick! Well-known sour varieties include the Montmorency and Morello varieties; the better known sweet varieties include the gold and red-tinged Rainier and classic deep red Bing cherries.

When choosing cherries, avoid ones that have split (you'll frequently see mold growing in the gap), and opt for ones with taut, richly-colored skin. And remember, stone fruits and berries tend to freeze quite well, preserving that peak freshness; so if you miss out on the fresh ones at the market, there's no shame in using frozen cherries for any of these recipes! While cherry pie (or perhaps Cherry Garcia) is likely the first thing that comes to mind when thinking about cherry recipes, they pair wonderfully with meats from lean pork to unctuous duck — so don't be afraid to take cherries for a spin on the savory side.

GO TO RECIPE >

Bourbon Cherries

EATING WELL

View Recipe

Yum

Black Forest Cake

BAKING A MOMENT

★★★★★

Cherry-Pork Meat Loaf

FOOD AND WINE

FRESH
5 INGREDIENT
Cherry Salsa

Cherry Salsa

ART FROM MY TABLE

Cherry Popovers Recipe –

SENSIBLYSARA

Cherry Lamingtons

DOMESTIC GOTHESS

Cherry Garcia Ice Cream

RECIPE GIRL

Apricots

Sweet apricots are on their way! You'll start seeing them in the market in June, with the sweeter cream-of-the-crop coming late in the month and continuing on through July and August. Like peaches and nectarines, you should be able to smell them when ripe, making for an exhilarating experience for your nose when you walk through the market.

To choose apricots, check out the color (after enjoying a good long sniff). The color gets deeper as apricots continue to ripen; and in the process, the fruits become sweeter. With the exception of tiny Blenheim apricots, you should avoid any fruits with a green tinge. When perfectly ripe, the delicate fruits will give slightly when you press on them lightly. A hard apricot will continue to soften at home, a process you can hurry along by putting it in a paper bag with an apple, pear, or banana. However, while they will get softer at home, they won't get any sweeter or develop more flavor — that only happens on the tree. Apricots should be stored on the counter away from heat and light, but will not keep long, so eat up!

For more tangy-sweet taste adventures, look for plum-apricot hybrids around this time as well. Plumcots, pluots, and apriums are all crosses of apricots and plums, covering the spectrum in between pure plum and pure apricot. All of these apricot varieties and hybrids are excellent for making jams and preserves, used in sweet crisps, crumbles, and pandowdies, and in savory applications, where they pair well with chicken or lamb accompanied by nuts and warming spices. Can't find good apricots locally? Dried apricot recipes abound as well as ones using apricot preserves, so anyone can indulge in the sweet flavor of apricots year-round.

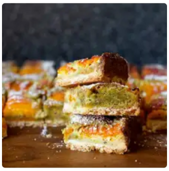
GO TO RECIPE >

Apricot Clafoutis

WILLIAMS-SONOMA

★★★★☆

View Recipe



Apricot Pistachio Squares

SMITTEN KITCHEN

Apricot Jam

LEITE'S CULINARIA

Chicken, Date & Apricot Tagine

NOT QUITE NIGELLA

★★★★☆

Apricot Chicken with Brie Cheese an…

CHEF IN TRAINING

★★★★½

Apricot Ricotta Honey Basil Bites

RELUCTANT ENTERTAINER

★★★★★

Apricot Couronne

BBC

★★★★☆

Plums

There's such a wide variety of plums available today, that if you've typically shrugged off plums, you really ought to take another look. For me, the eye-opening experience was making jam with Italian plums — never had I realized that this sort of rich, sweet jam with great depth of flavor could come from a simple plum mixed with sugar. After expanding into Italian plums, I became obsessed with seeking out the elusive Damson plum, star of the classic British jam (feel free to send me a case if you happen upon them).

Plum varieties are grouped as either Japanese, American, or European (and in many cases, a blend of two or all of the above). The Santa Rosa plum is the hallmark of Japanese-style plums, despite the fact that it was developed in the 1920s in Santa Rosa, California. The Santa Rosa is the plum you envision in your mind: red-skinned and yellow-fleshed with red flecks. European plums (which are more often dried to make prunes) come into season later on in the year, so check back in late summer/early fall for the aforementioned Italian plums.

Like other stone fruits (or perhaps an avocado), plums have a short window of perfect ripeness. Picked too early, they'll be hard and never develop their signature sweet flavor; but an overripe plum will spoil quickly, leading to an off flavor and texture. A perfect plum shouldn't be hard, but also shouldn't be squishy — like many of the June fruits, they should simply give a little when gently pressed. Needless to say, plums don't keep well, so you're best off eating them as a special treat right when you get home from the market or buying a bunch on a weekend to immediately freeze, turn into jam, or otherwise preserve.

GO TO RECIPE >

Roasted Plums

LEITE'S CULINARIA

View Recipe

Hazelnut Plum Crumb Tart

SMITTEN KITCHEN

Plum Kuchen

EPICURIOUS

★★★★★

Damson Plum & Gin Jam

LOVE AND OLIVE OIL

Plum Crumble Bread

KITCHEN SANCTUARY

Summer Barbecue Plum Sauce

LADY BEHIND THE CURT…

Pork Chops with Warm Plum Sauce

MYRECIPES

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