ARTICLE / YUMMLY COOKING STORY

What to Eat Now: September

Berries may be on their way out, but September shines with apples, grapes, mangoes, and dates. While tomatoes are disappearing from markets, carrots, peppers, and bok choy continue to delight.

Joanna LeRoy
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September is the bridge between the summer and fall harvests, ushering in favorite fruits such as apples, grapes, mangoes, and dates. Classic veggies like carrots and bell peppers can be found side by side with bok choy in market stalls overflowing with last-of-summer tomatoes and berries. Here's what to do with September's harvest — savor it while you can!

Bok Choy

Bok choy (also called pak choi) is a classic Chinese ingredient appearing in everything from soups to stir-fries and salads. There are several varieties of bok choy, ranging in size from large to small; the smaller varieties, such as Shanghai bok choi or dwarf bok choi, are often sold as "baby bok choy" even though they're fully grown.

Hailing from the brassica family, this atypical cabbage is delicate with a mild, light flavor. Bok choy is beloved not only for its fresh, almost sweet flavor but also its dual texture: the soft green leaves wilt quickly with heat for a pleasingly soft texture similar to spinach, while the white ends remain crisp, providing a satisfying, crunchy counterpoint.

When buying bok choy, look for a firm, crisp base and well-formed green leaves. Dirt can hide easily in the base, so do be sure to rinse it well right before using. Prior to that, store the bok choy in a plastic bag in the refrigerator, where it will keep well for 3-4 days.

Due to bok choy's delicate nature, it fares well with quick cooking methods such as stir-frying, sauteeing, or steaming. While bok choy generally doesn't get too tough, the larger varieties are often chopped for use in salads, whereas smaller varieties can be stir-fried whole or simply chopped in half. I was first introduced to bok choy when it showed up at my door in a meal kit; there, the baby bok choy was simply halved and quickly sauteed with a bit of oil and soy sauce. Once I saw how quick and easy it was to prepare this way, bok choy became a regular guest in my kitchen as a healthy alternative to more mainstream greens. If you're not a soy sauce fan, mustard or fish sauce are good alternatives to liven up the flavor of bok choy.

GO TO RECIPE ›

Bok Choy and Shiitake Mushrooms with Gochujang Vinaigrette

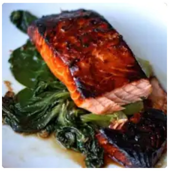
VEGAN MIAM

View Recipe

Yum

Raw Coconut Bok Choy Spicy Soup

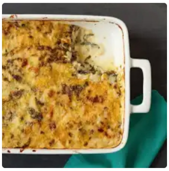
RAWMAZING



Honey-Soy Glazed Salmon with Bok Ch…

SERIOUS EATS

★★★★½



Buttery Bok Choy Gratin

EVERYDAY WITH RACHA…

Braised Fish with Bok Choy in Shiit…

BORROWED SALT

Lapsang Souchong Chicken with Bok C…

EATING WELL

Bok Choy And Mango Salad With Miso…

KITCHEN STORIES

Carrots

Sure, you can buy carrots in plastic bags at the grocery store year-round, but for the best tasting carrots, get thee to a farmer's market, stat! This time of year, you'll find markets brimming with more unique varieties of carrots in a rainbow of colors: yellow, cream, orange, and even purple. Not only is a great variety of colors available, but also of tastes; in particular, look for small Nantes carrots, prized for their sweet taste, or pick out the stubby, round Parisian market varieties. A freshly grown Imperator carrot — the common grocery store variety — will also taste that much better this time of year.

And what about that perennial favorite, the baby carrot? It's not what you get in the supermarket; those are baby-*cut* carrots, i.e. standard Imperators that have been **cut, peeled, and polished**. True baby carrots do exist, however, and can be found in farmer's markets and specialty produce stores. Baby carrots are not actually harvested young but are simply a variety that stays small when fully mature. In fact, carrots become sweeter and more flavorful as they mature, so will taste the best at the height of the season.

When shopping, look for firm carrots without cracks, and, if the greens are still attached, healthy green tops. Carrot greens can be used in a variety of preparations (see the **carrot top pesto** recipe below!); however, if you don't intend to use the greens, remove them before storing as they will leach flavor from the root. Carrots are a great source of beta carotene, which your body uses to make Vitamin A — the deeper the orange, the more beta carotene the carrot contains.

Stored unpeeled, dry, and with sufficient air circulation, carrots will keep for several weeks in the refrigerator. Keep carrots away from apples and pears when storing, as they can adversely affect the taste of the carrots.

Carrots are a culinary workhorse, adding depth to soups and stews, creating layers of flavor in a classic French mirepoix, or providing a satisfying crunch eaten raw out of hand or shredded in salads. Carrots have a very high sugar content compared to other vegetables, so they're an excellent choice for adding a hint of sweetness to tomato sauces and baked goods. Simple preparations such as roasting or steaming will highlight the flavor of fresh carrots; for something a bit off the beaten path, check out some of the more unusual preparations below.

Rainbow Roasted Carrots with Mustard and Cumin Seeds

GO TO RECIPE ›

Rainbow Roasted Carrots with Mustard and Cumin Seeds

UMAMI GIRL

View Recipe

Balsamic Grilled Carrot Dogs

WELL VEGAN

★★★★★

Gajar Ka Halwa, Carrot Halwa

COOKING WEEKENDS

Carrot Cake

BROWN EYED BAKER

★★★★★

Raw Carrot Sandwich Bread

GLUTEN FREE CAT

Carrot Top Cashew Pesto

GIVE IT SOME THYME

★★★★☆

Sweet (Bell) Peppers

Like carrots, peppers are ubiquitous year round, but flourish this time of year. Peppers, fruits from the nightshade family, are typically categorized as either sweet peppers or hot peppers, and come in a rainbow of colors including red, orange, yellow, green, and purple. Sweet peppers are commonly referred to as bell peppers due to their classic shape.

Pick peppers with firm, thick, and unwrinkled skin that feel heavy for their size. A perfect pepper will be crisp to the bite and sport a healthy green stem. Follow your instincts when selecting your produce; a ripe pepper will look healthy and colorful! Peppers should be stored in a cool space, but beware the refrigerator — it's typically too cold. Also avoid storing peppers in plastic bags, as this can capture moisture and lead to premature decay.

Peppers can provide a bit of a challenge to cut without making a mess due to the center core of seeds. My favorite way to keep things tidy is to start by cutting off both the top and bottom of the pepper with a large chef's knife, then make a downward slice next to one of the white membranes to open up the side of the pepper. From there, run the knife along the inside wall of the pepper, detaching the membranes as you go, until the center core is released and you're left with a flat, rectangular sheet of pepper, ready to dice or slice as needed.

Again like carrots, peppers appear in cuisines from around the world, often paired with onions and celery in the base of stews and sauces. Peppers are incredibly versatile and can be roasted, grilled, sauteed, pureed, smoked, stuffed, pickled, and of course, eaten raw with a bit of dip. The recipes below are just a small sampling of the various ways you can use peppers; try a **Yummly search** for over 150,000 more recipe ideas!

GO TO RECIPE >

Keto Philly Cheese Steak Stuffed Peppers

CAST IRON KETO

★★★★½

View Recipe

Piedmontese Peppers

FOOD52

Sheet Pan Sichuan Chicken and Veget…

YUMMLY

Creamy Roasted Pepper Soup

ADORE FOODS

★★★★★

★★★★★

Red Pepper Jelly

INSPIRED BY CHARM

Pickled Peppers

UGLY FOOD MAKEOVER

Bell Pepper Salad

FOOD FIDELITY

Dates

Sweet, chewy dates are stone fruits that grow on the date palm tree; a single one of these hardy trees may produce dates for up to 40-50 yrs. The bulk of American dates are grown in the Coachella Valley of California, where the Deglet Noor variety is king. Dark-skinned Medjool dates are the most common variety, with the lighter-skinned Deglet Noor following closely in popularity. True aficionados will want to familiarize themselves with some of the lesser-known varieties such as the super-soft Barhi date, the mild Zahidi for those that prefer less sweetness, and indulgent, creamy-textured Honey date.

Fresh dates are typically partially dried when purchased, but do look for ones that aren't overly dried. Your dates should be moist, pliable, and somewhat sticky while still holding a distinct shape (wrinkles are to be expected). If you see white spots on your dates, have no fear! That's not mold; it's the natural sugars making their way to the outside of the fruit.

Because dates are naturally dehydrated, they'll keep at room temperature for several months; better yet, refrigerate them, and they can last for up to a year! Dates have a pit in the center that should be removed during preparation along with any stems — you can also buy them pitted to save yourself the trouble. As a bonus, the gap left by the pit leaves a perfect space for stuffing the dates with savory meats or creamy cheeses.

Dates are equally at home in sweet and savory dishes, and are often used to replace processed sugars in health-conscious baking. They add sweet contrast to slow cooked meat tagines, and their flavor pops paired with bacon, nuts, or chocolate. Try one of the recipes below to explore new ways to incorporate dates into your menu.

GO TO RECIPE >

Bacon Wrapped Dates

COOKIE ROOKIE

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Prosciutto and Date Palmiers

GARLIC AND ZEST

★★★★☆

Vegan Dulce Date Leche Popsicles

VEGNEWS

Tahini Salted Choc Date Chews

SEED AND MILL

Date Honey Nut Cake

TORI AVEY

★★★★½

Chicken, Date & Apricot Tagine

NOT QUITE NIGELLA

★★★★☆

Chocolate And Date Puddings

DONNA HAY

Apples

This classic American fruit ushers in the fall harvest as we say our goodbyes to summer. While thousands of varieties of apples can be found throughout the world, a mere **15 varieties** account for over 90% of the apple production in the States. Popular varieties include mild Golden Delicious apples; tart and crisp Granny Smiths, a favorite for use in pies; small McIntoshes, ideal for applesauce and cider; Red Delicious snacking apples; aptly named sweet Honeycrisps; crisp and juicy Galas; and all-purpose Braeburns, Empires, and Cortlands.

Select apples that are firm to hard; while surface blemishes are not problematic, you should avoid any bruising or holes that puncture the skin. Apples are great storage fruits and will keep for up to 6 weeks in the crisper drawer of your fridge. Do keep them refrigerated even if you plan to eat them quickly — apples can become mealy in as little as two days at room temperature.

The skins of apples provide flavor, nutrients, and fiber, so go ahead and leave them unpeeled unless the recipe you're working on specifically calls for the peels to be removed. But clean them well! Apples appear on the notorious "dirty dozen" list of fruits that contain high amounts of pesticides if not grown organically, so be sure to wash them before using the skins. When cutting apples, keep a bowl of water and lemon juice nearby; as you slice the apple, toss the pieces in the bowl tol help stave off browning. As a general rule of thumb, sweet apples are best for eating out of hand, while tart apples are excellent for baking.

GO TO RECIPE ›

Bourbon Baked Apples

HOW SWEET IT IS

View Recipe Yum

Homemade Apple Chips

YUMMY HEALTHY EASY

Classic Apple Pie

YUMMLY

★★★★½

Apple Cinnamon Pork Chops

PORK

★★★★½

Buttermilk Apple Cider Donuts

A CORK, FORK, AND PAS…

Homemade Apple Butter

TASTES OF LIZZY T

Mangoes

Apples may have a reputation as America's favorite fruit, but worldwide, the mango is eaten more than any other. In India, the volume and number of varieties of mangoes available are overwhelming; here in the States, however, most of the mangoes we see are the Tommy Atkins variety, imported from Mexico. In the Coachella Valley of California (home of the aforementioned date palm trees), green-skinned Keitt mangoes are just beginning to come into season. Other mangoes you'll find in the states include honey mangoes and Kent mangoes.

Mangoes vary in color from gold to green to red, so you'll need to rely on something other than color to determine ripeness. Fresh mangoes should be soft to the touch when ripe, but not so soft that they bruise under pressure. You may see some small black spots on your mango; that's OK as long as there's no accompanying signs of decay. Mangoes should be stored on the counter (not the fridge), where they'll keep for 1-2 weeks. Unripe mangoes are often used for chutney; however if you want to speed up the ripening for another use, place the mango in a paper bag with an apple.

Because mangoes contain a wide, flat pit in the center, you'll need a plan of attack to slice it open. You'll notice that the mango is not round; it has two wide sides (called "cheeks"), and two narrow sides. Start by removing the juicy cheeks: Using a large chef's knife, cut the mango in half through the stem end until you hit the pit, then follow the curve of the pit to remove the two wide sides. Trim the remaining fruit from the narrow sides, and discard the pit after greedily sucking down any fruit scraps left attached to the pit. Next, take the cheeks and gently cut the fruit into squares like you would an avocado, then invert the cheek and use your knife to detach the cubes from the skin.

About those skins: mango skins can contain urushiol, the same chemical in poison ivy or poison oak, and should be avoided by people who are particularly sensitive to these plants (look up "mango itch"). While some smoothie recipes or pickled mangoes may use the skin, the bulk of the recipes you find — from classic mango lassis to tropical salsas — call for the skin to be removed.

GO TO RECIPE >

Mango Salsa

SERENA BAKES SIMPLY FROM SCRATCH

View Recipe Yum

Mango Chutney (Major Grey's Style)

STRIPED SPATULA

★★★★★

Mango Melt

LOVE AND RISOTTO

Mango Bars

BAKING BITES

★★★★☆

Mango Lassi

COOK WITH MANALI

Grilled Mango Chicken

SHANAZ RAFIQ-BLOG

★★★★★

Mango Tiramisu

BLUE BERRY VEGAN

Grapes

While grapes are technically a berry, we tend to think of them as being in a league of their own. Perhaps most famous for their role in making wine, grapes are as varied as the wines they produce, with an estimated 10,000+ varietals in existence today. For the average American, however, grapes are bought for eating, not winemaking. Some of the more prevalent table grapes include tiny, sweet, Champagne grapes, as lovely to look at as to eat; common mild green or red seedless varieties, frequently dried to make raisins; large black grapes that make a lovely (and flavorful) addition to a cheeseboard; sweet and snackable cotton candy grapes; and, of course, the classic native Northeast grape, the Concord, a favorite cooking grape for jams, juice, and syrup.

When buying grapes, be sure the fruit is firm, with no soft spots or signs of shriveling. Remember, the smaller the grape, the more flavorful it is. And what about that gray film you often see on the outside of grapes? It's called the bloom, and is actually a good thing. It's not a pesticide; it's a naturally occurring substance that helps protect the grape and keeps it fresh. And it's fine to eat! Grapes should be stored unwashed in the refrigerator for maximum life, then washed in cool water just before eating.

Alternately, many people enjoy freezing grapes for cool, sweet treat. To freeze, spread the grapes in a single layer on a pan and freeze for about an hour; now you can tuck the grapes into a plastic freezer bag where they'll stay good for up to two weeks. Snacking aside, grapes are great for jam-making due to their high pectin content, while pickled grapes are a fantastic companion to blue cheese. Used in dips, salsas, or chicken salad, grapes add an unexpected burst of flavor and sweetness to savory dishes. Try one of the recipes below to help you make creative use of fresh grapes this season.

GO TO RECIPE >

Grape Salsa with Tarragon

BON APPÉTIT

View Recipe

Chicken with Grape Sauce

EVERYDAY WITH RACHA...

Grape Focaccia with Rosemary

SMITTEN KITCHEN

★★★★☆

Concord Grape Pie

MAMAGOURMAND

Quick-Pickled Grapes

BROOKLYN SUPPER

Black Grape Sorbet

MOMMY EVOLUTION

Grape Guacamole

NIBBLES AND FEASTS

★★★★★

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