




A Trio of Holiday Heroes: Vegetables, Beans, and Fruit

Who hasn't had a guest or two arrive unexpectedly during the holidays, bringing joy – but also instant panic about what to feed them?

While vegetables, beans, and fruit usually play a secondary role to roasted turkey or baked ham during the holidays, these talented supporting players can help you stretch your meals economically and deliciously.

With a well-stocked pantry filled with fresh, frozen or canned vegetables and fruit, and canned beans and legumes, you can easily make your meals (and your food budget) go further this holiday season. Here are just a few ways these ingredients can be your holiday heroes:

Vegetables	Beans	Fruit
<p>Vegetables add flavor, texture and color, along with lots of tummy-filling fiber, too, which can make you feel fuller. Use them in frittatas, casseroles, pasta and whole grain dishes, and soups and stews.</p> <p>Frozen and canned vegetables are time savers in the kitchen; they're already prepped so there's no fuss or waste. That stew you planned for your family of four stretches easily to six with the addition of a can of vegetables (drained and rinsed) or a packet of frozen ones. Or cook up a package of whole grain pasta, and pile on the vegetables for everyone's favorite, a healthy pasta meal.</p> <p>For a boost of umami - that savory taste that we equate with meat and shellfish - use mushrooms, tomatoes, potatoes and carrots. They complement meat and fish, and add volume and depth of flavor to plant-based foods, such as vegetable lasagna. Umami flavors are a crowd-pleaser – and most people won't even miss the meat!</p>	<p>Beef up meat dishes with beans. Whether you're using leftover meat, or starting a meal from scratch, beans provide texture, taste, and added oomph to dishes such as soups, chili, and stews. They also pair nicely with salads, whole grains or pasta dishes. Add a can of black beans to turn one pound of ground beef into two; add white beans to chicken dishes, or puree garbanzo or black beans with a little olive oil and garlic for an almost-instant healthy dip.</p>  <p><i>With these pantry items on hand, you no longer have to panic when the doorbell rings. Instead you can relax and whip up delicious and healthy meals in a snap.</i></p>	<p>For last-minute dessert ideas, there's no need to run to the nearest bakery when you have fruit on hand. Whether it's fresh, frozen or canned, you can create a light and healthy dessert anyone is bound to enjoy.</p> <p>If you have fresh apples or pears and 20 minutes to spare, roasted fruit makes an easy, quick dessert. Slice fruit into wedges and toss with olive oil, citrus juice or a splash of wine or beer – this will help make a sauce during roasting. Sprinkle with your favorite spices, such as cinnamon and nutmeg and roast for 20 minutes at 400°. Serve with a dollop of ice cream, plain Greek yogurt, or whipped cream. If you want to boost the caramelization of the fruit, place under the broiler at the end of the cooking time; 3-5 minutes should do it.</p> <p>Frozen or canned fruit can be puréed in a blender to create a smooth parfait-like treat. Blend any available fruit with the juice of an orange or lemon, and then add plain Greek yogurt or ice cream. Purée to incorporate all the ingredients. Pour into decorative glasses and garnish with orange or lemon zest, or a sprig of mint.</p>