

# Seasonal Produce to Add to Your Sport Performance Plate

by Page Love, MS, RDN, CSSD LD; Nancy Anderson, MPH, RDN, CSSD, LD; and Chelsea Stephens, Dietetic Intern, Wellness Workdays

You can work on your sport nutrition routine for your sports game any time of year. In autumn and winter, take advantage of fall/winter produce options to get an antioxidant punch to your performance routine. Check out these key produce items and how you can use them for pre- or post-play to enhance your performance and your health!

## Pumpkin

- Pumpkins are extremely beneficial to athletic performance and recovery. The high potassium content in pumpkins is essential for heart health and skeletal systems.
- Pre-workout: ½ cup of pumpkin puree in oatmeal
- Post-workout: ½ cup of pumpkin puree in protein shake

## Beets

- Research suggests that nitrates in beets can improve performance, endurance, and heart proficiency in athletes.
- Pre- or Post-workout: “Beet and Berry Smoothie” 1 cup frozen berries (blueberries), ½ cup raw beets, banana, hemp/chia/flax seeds, spinach/kale, ½ cup unsweetened almond milk/Greek yogurt. Enjoy!

## Sweet Potato

- The potassium and magnesium in sweet potatoes can help prevent muscle spasms from occurring during your athletic endeavors.
- Pre- or Post-workout: “Sweet Potato Rounds” Slice potatoes into ½ in rounds. Toss in olive oil and seasoning. Bake until golden brown. Enjoy!

## Pears

- Pears provide beneficial antioxidants, flavonoids, and dietary fiber to reduce inflammation and improve recovery time from intense exercise.
- Pre-sport: Try a pear salad with gorgonzola or goat cheese as a side with your sandwich before you play
- Post-sport: Blending one cup of your favorite fruit (pears) with protein fortified almond, soy, or low-fat milk and ice



## Cranberries

- The polyphenols in cranberries can also help to improve vascular function, which has a powerful effect on an athlete's cardiovascular health.
- Pre-sport: Make your own snack packs with a handful of cranberries, especially a pre-tennis trail mix including granola and nuts, equal parts of all three foods for a ¾ cup portion.