You may have heard of vitamins like vitamin C, vitamin E, and beta-carotene. What do these vitamins all have in common? They are the most familiar vitamins that contain antioxidant properties.

Better known as “antioxidants”, they help fight against free radicals, which are molecules that can damage cells and lead to chronic diseases. Antioxidants can be found in many foods and work best in combination with other nutrients.

Here are some nutrients with antioxidant activity and some foods they are found in:

**Vitamin C:** Broccoli, Brussels sprouts, cantaloupe, cauliflower, grapefruit, leafy greens, kale, lemon, orange, strawberries, sweet potatoes, tomatoes, and all bell peppers

**Vitamin E:** Almonds, avocado, leafy greens, peanuts, red peppers, spinach, and sunflower seeds

**Carotenoids:** Apricots, asparagus, watermelon, carrots, pumpkin, beets, collard greens, tomatoes

**Selenium:** Brazil nuts, fish, shellfish, beef, poultry, barley, brown rice

**Zinc:** Beef, poultry, shrimp, sesame seeds, chickpeas, lentils, cashews, fortified cereals

This list is not exhaustive; however, it can be a great starting point for including these foods in your everyday eating. In fact, you may find that you are already eating some of these foods and reaping the benefits of antioxidants. Start by noting which foods you are regularly eating and challenge yourself this month to try a new food from the list above.

A balanced diet that includes regular consumption of a variety of fruits, vegetables, whole grains, legumes, and lean protein can enhance and offer some of the health benefits from antioxidants!
Nutritious Bytes

Looking for Recipe Inspiration?
Check out Click ‘N Cook®, our online recipe database at clickncook.org

Baked Sweet Potato Casserole

Ingredients
- 1 1/2 teaspoons brown sugar
- 2 tablespoons milk, low fat
- 1 teaspoon cinnamon, ground
- 1/4 cup quick oats, uncooked
- 1 14.5-ounce can sweet potatoes, low sodium, drained, chopped

Directions
1. Preheat oven to 350 degrees F.
2. In a small bowl, combine milk, brown sugar, cinnamon, and oatmeal. Mix well and set aside.
3. In a medium-size baking pan, add the sweet potatoes so that they cover the bottom of the pan.
4. Add the oatmeal mixture on top of the sweet potatoes.
5. Bake for 20 minutes. Serve hot.

Makes 6 servings

Nutrition Facts
Baked Sweet Potato Casserole
Amount Per Serving (1/2 cup each)

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<th>Nutrient</th>
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* Percent Daily Values are based on a 2000 calorie diet.
Ingredients
• 5 green peppers, cut in half lengthwise
• 1/2 onion, chopped
• 2 cloves garlic, minced
• 3 cups rice, brown, cooked
• 1 10.5-ounce can diced tomatoes with chiles, undrained
• 12 ounces corn, frozen, thawed and drained
• 1/2 cup cheddar cheese, shredded

Directions
1. Remove seeds from peppers. Cook in boiling water 2 to 3 minutes. Drain. Set aside.
2. Cook onion and garlic in oil in medium skillet over medium-high heat for 3 minutes.
3. Combine rice, tomatoes, corn and onion mixture. Mix well.
5. Bake at 350°F for 10 minutes or until hot. Sprinkle with cheese.
6. Bake again at 350°F for 5 minutes until cheese melts.
Prepping School Lunches

With the new school year fast approaching, this can be a great time to start thinking about school lunches! Here are three tips to be mindful of and help you with packing school lunches:

**Planning:**
Planning takes the most time out of prepping, but the more you do it, the easier it will be. Start by thinking of what everyone will eat for the week, see if you have any of the ingredients already at home, and make a list for food shopping. Be sure to stick to the list!

**Preparation:**
The easiest way to make sure you are safely preparing food in your kitchen is by washing your hands frequently and cleaning anything that comes in contact with the food. Prep any food that will be ready-to-eat first like fruits, vegetables, or deli meats and then prep foods that need to be cooked.

**Packing:**
When packing the food, use an insulated lunch bag and make sure there are two cold sources with the ready-to-eat foods such as frozen water bottles or freezer packs. This will ensure that the food will be kept safely cold (at 40 degrees Fahrenheit or below) until lunch time!