

Seasonal Eating
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Hardy Herbs Complement Winter Vegetables
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March is one of those transitional months - in like a lion, out like a lamb. It looks pretty outside but can be deceiving and everyone is looking forward to the longer, warmer days and fresh produce from the garden. But for now we depend on our pantry, longer storage items and staple produce from the grocery store.

Onions and potatoes are good long storage items to carry through the colder months. Carrots, celery and mushrooms are available year round in the grocery store and are a good way to get vegetables in the winter and early spring. All of these items work well in soups, stews and pot roasted items. Beef stew is one of my favorite cold weather meals and takes just a little chopping of the onions, celery, carrots and potatoes up front and then a long cooking period that makes the house smell heavenly on the weekend. Sear the stew beef, soften the onions and then pour in the beef broth and add the other veggies. After thickening the juices just a little bit during the last 20-30 minutes, Mom always made fluffy dumplings with baking mix and milk to steam on top. Makes my mouth water just thinking about it.



These staples also work well roasted in the oven or sautéed. Potatoes can be cut up, tossed with a little oil and then sprinkled with dry ranch or Italian salad dressing mix. Pop into the oven at 350 - 400 degrees until tender and browned. Sliced onions and mushrooms can be sautéed in a little oil for a great side to beef steaks or roasted chicken. Start them out on high heat with just a little stirring until browned and then turn down to finish and add a little Worcestershire sauce during the last couple of minutes.

To complement these staples we do have a couple of treasures left in the garden in the form of herbs. The rosemary, thyme and oregano are still doing well in my herb garden out the back door. These are the perfect robust herbs for seasoning potatoes, carrots and mushrooms. To strip the needles or leaves of the rosemary and thyme, hold the tip of the stem in one hand and pinch the stem with the other hand and pull down the stem from the tip stripping the leaves off as you go. Rosemary and oregano have a strong flavor so start with a little and add more if needed.

The Pan Roasted Chicken recipe here uses sprigs of rosemary to flavor on-the-bone chicken breasts. The chicken is seared until golden and then shallots, rosemary and mushrooms are added. The chicken and vegetables finish cooking by roasting in the oven. Shallots are a member of the onion family with a milder flavor that

becomes very sweet when roasted. The pan juices are reduced with lemon juice and poured over the meat for a moist and delicious dinner.

For more ideas on using seasonal produce, visit the Bedford County Extension website (<https://utextension.tennessee.edu/bedford>). The Seasonal Eating Cooking Demonstration on Herbs and Staples will be held on March 21 at 12:00 noon at the Extension Office. Call the Extension Office at 684-5971 to sign up and bring \$5.00 to cover the samples.

Pan Roasted Chicken

- 2 bone-in chicken breast halves
- Salt and pepper to taste
- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 10 mushrooms cut into thick slices
- 4 shallots, peeled and cut in half
- 1 large sprig rosemary
- Juice of 1/2 lemon

Season chicken breasts generously with salt and pepper. Heat an oven proof skillet over medium heat. Add olive oil to the pan. Add the chicken breasts to the hot oil, skin side down. Sear the skin until it turns golden brown, about 10 minutes. Turn chicken over and add mushrooms, shallots and rosemary to the pan. Place in a 350 degree oven and roast until chicken is cooked through and the shallots and mushrooms are tender, about 30-45 minutes. Remove the chicken and vegetables from the pan. Reduce the juices to a couple of tablespoons and add the lemon juice. Pour over the chicken.