



## FRESH PICKS

**Many people say that fall is their favorite season of the year as they look forward to pumpkin spice beverages and foods, fall festivals and Thanksgiving. But, for others, it is the start of a season with less sunlight and subsequent depression. This issue provides you with ideas for fall favorites as well as informing you about Seasonal Affective Disorder.**

### SEASONAL AFFECTIVE DISORDER

Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD) is a type of depression that mostly commonly occurs starting in the fall and throughout the winter. SAD often includes a decline in energy level, loss of interest in activities, changes in appetite and weight and a change in mood. The criteria for diagnosing SAD used by the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders include having the following experiences for at least the last two years:

- Depression that begins during a specific season every year
- Depression that ends during a specific season every year
- No episodes of depression during the season in which you experience a normal mood
- Many more seasons of depression than seasons without depression over the lifetime of your illness

The causes of SAD are unknown but some contributing factors may include a disruption of one's biological clock (circadian rhythms), serotonin levels or melatonin levels - all of which are impacted by reduced sunlight.

Are you at risk for SAD? Reduced sunlight can impact everyone, but the following factors may increase your risk:

- **Female gender...**women more often diagnosed than men
- **Age...**younger people are more prone
- **Pre-existing clinical depression or bipolar disorder**
- **Living farther from the equator...**directly correlates to sunlight exposure

Common treatments include light therapy, psychotherapy and medication. Light therapy, also known as phototherapy, involves exposure to a bright light that mimics outdoor light and may show an improvement within days to weeks after exposure. Psychotherapy can help people identify and change negative thoughts, learn healthy ways to cope and better manage stress. Medications often include antidepressants that can take weeks to notice the difference. All three of these treatments attempt to improve serotonin, melatonin and/or circadian rhythms. Other lifestyle measures may also be useful and include being proactive about increasing sun exposure by opening blinds, trimming branches that block sunlight, sitting closer to windows, spending time outside and exercise.

While studies do not support the notion that food alone can treat depression, the following nutrition motivated measures may help improve one's mood, energy level, blood sugar regulation and sleep:

- Eat regularly spaced meals and snacks with a source of high fiber carbohydrates, lean protein and healthy fats.
- Lean protein can help stimulate production of adrenaline, an energizing neurotransmitter.
- Minimize consumption of sweetened beverages which can cause a blood sugar surge followed by a plummet.
- Minimize alcohol as a coping mechanism as it can help one fall asleep but often disrupts sleep later.
- Eat sufficient calories, otherwise known as energy. People can feel low energy from insufficient food intake.
- Drink water, at least 8 cups per day to help maintain optimal hydration.
- Avoid drinking excessive caffeine, especially after 3 pm to minimize any adverse impact on sleep quality later.
- Have your Vitamin D level checked. Vitamin D levels are often lower in people who live further from the equator and in cold weather climates. Sun exposure helps to convert or activate Vitamin D in the body. Dietary sources are limited so this is often a nutrient for which supplementation is suggested.



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## WINTER WARMER RECIPES

### ONE-POT WONDERS

A crock-pot or slow-cooker is a wonderful solution when you have time but you don't want to spend all of it cooking. Consider the seasonal ease these recipes can offer while dusting your home with authentic aromas no candle or incense can compete with. May these recipes inspire your own slow-cooker creations into becoming your family's fast preparation favorites.

#### Butternut Squash Risotto

- 3 Tablespoons olive oil
- 4 cups or 2 pounds peeled, ½ inch cubed butternut squash (can vary with other winter squash, sweet potato or root vegetables)
- ½ teaspoon dried sage
- Salt
- Pepper
- 3 cups ½ inch wide slices of leeks
- ½ teaspoon chopped garlic
- 2 cups Arborio rice
- 7 cups vegetable or chicken broth
- 1 cup chopped fresh basil
- ¾ cup grated Parmesan cheese

Heat cooker to high. Add 1 tablespoon olive oil, garlic, and leeks until leeks are soft but not brown. Stir in rice and thyme. Add 7 cups broth, close lid and leave covered for 1 hour, stirring occasionally. While rice/risotto cooks, combine the squash cubes with 2 tablespoons olive oil, sage, salt and pepper and cook in skillet on stove or in oven until cooked through. After the rice/risotto has cooked for 1 hour, add the cooked butternut squash, basil and Parmesan cheese. Serve and enjoy!

#### Balsamic-Glazed Beets

- 3 pounds beets, peeled, cut into ½ inch slices
- 1 cup unsweetened apple juice
- ½ cup balsamic vinegar
- 2 cloves garlic, finely chopped
- 1 teaspoon salt
- ¼ cup chopped walnuts
- 1 tablespoon cornstarch
- 1 tablespoon cold water
- ¼ cup goat cheese

Spray slow cooker with cooking spray. Add beets, apple juice, vinegar, garlic and salt to slow cooker. Cover and cook on high for 3-4 hours. In a small bowl, mix cornstarch with water, stir mixture into beets in slow cooker. Cook uncovered 5-10 minutes until sauce has thickened. Sprinkle with cheese and walnuts and serve.



### SLOW-COOKER SOLUTIONS

Crock-pot is a brand name of a slow-cooker. The internet is full of recipes using "crock-pot" or "slow-cooker" as a search term. Seek out recipes with healthy unprocessed ingredients. Move over "can of cream of mushroom soup", there is a new health conscious chef in town! For more ideas...

- Visit Eating Well online: [http://www.eatingwell.com/recipes/menus/collections/healthy\\_slow\\_cooker\\_recipes](http://www.eatingwell.com/recipes/menus/collections/healthy_slow_cooker_recipes)
- To download a free cookbook of slow-cooker recipes with chicken: [http://www.eatingwell.com/free\\_downloads/slow\\_cooker\\_chicken\\_recipes\\_cookbook](http://www.eatingwell.com/free_downloads/slow_cooker_chicken_recipes_cookbook)
- For slow-cooker favorites from Cooking Light: <http://www.cookinglight.com/food/top-rated-recipes/slow-cooker-favorites>

