

Remember the taste of summer fruits

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I just got back from a trip to Florida. While I was there, I was amazed at how good the fresh fruit tasted. The fruit I buy here in the grocery store during the winter is okay, but it's just not the same. Sometimes the varieties of fruit that are sold at the store are selected because they ship well, not because they taste good. Because it's so cold in Minnesota, fruit has to be sent a long way (from places like South America!) so when we get it, it's already weeks old and isn't really very fresh. I've found a way to get fresh fruit taste in the winter by making my own fruit trail mix.

You'll need to make a trip to the grocery store, but not to the fresh fruit aisle. Instead, look for the dried fruits. When fruit is grown to be dried it doesn't matter if it ships well. Thus, farmers can grow varieties that taste really good and pick the fruit when it's really ripe and tasty. The dried fruit is shipped after it is dried and packaged so when we buy it at the store it still has lots of flavor and nutrients. This is the recipe for trail mix that I like to make, but you can substitute any dried fruit and nuts that you like.

Fruit Trail Mix

1 cup of dried apples
1/2 cup of light raisins
1/2 cup dried cherries
1/2 cup broken banana chips
1 cup of broken walnuts or pecans
1/2 cup shelled sunflower seeds

This recipe is easy; all you do is open the packages and pour the ingredients together into a bowl. Stir them together with a big spoon being sure to break up the banana chips. If you can't eat nuts, substitute natural granola, and of course use any dried fruits that you like as fresh fruits. There are lots of dried fruits to pick from. My recipe makes about 4 cups of trail mix so I divide it up into 12 zipper bags. It's great for putting into bag lunches or keeping in the kitchen for snack attacks!

Since dried fruit has all the water removed, it's very sweet. Along with all that sugar you get lots of essential fiber and potassium. The walnuts and sunflower seeds are good sources of protein and vitamin E and they have smaller amounts of iron and magnesium. Next summer when our local farmers have fruits in the stores and at farmers markets, get some extra so you can dry your own to eat next winter. You won't be sorry!