

Solutions for

# BETTER LIVING

## *Cooking*

Fourth Edition

**Healthy choices**

**Meal planning**

**Food budgeting**

**Eating well**

**Food preservation**

**Healthy conversions**

**Recipes**



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# Smart food choices to make every day

The basis for a healthy eating plan should be fruits and vegetables; whole grains; low-fat or fat-free milk products; lean meats, poultry, fish; and beans, lentils and other legumes. Within these categories are foods that stand out as superstars, containing many nutrients to enhance health and prevent disease. Build on them to make smart food choices every day.



**Spinach.** We all know that spinach makes Popeye stronger, probably because this dark green veggie is full of vital nutrients. Spinach provides us with vitamin K to help with blood clotting. It also contains vitamin A for healthy skin and vision, folate for red blood cell formation and

proper cell division and iron for oxygen transport within the body. Spinach also contains some calcium, potassium (which can help lower blood pressure) and fiber. Add spinach to casseroles or lasagna, or make a side salad with spinach to enjoy with your meal.



**Blueberries.** This tasty fruit contains fiber and vitamin C, which is an antioxidant that aids in disease prevention, helps maintain bones and teeth and supports iron absorption. Blueberries contain antioxidants called anthocyanins as well, which give the berries their blue-red color. These antioxidants appear to help neutralize damage to cells that can lead to many negative health conditions and diseases. Blueberries may also play a role in brain health. Buy frozen blueberries when they are not in season and add them to cereal, desserts or oatmeal.



**Black beans.** All beans can promote health, but black beans contain anthocyanins—the same antioxidant found in blueberries. Black beans also contain soluble fiber, which can help

lower cholesterol. Beans contain protein as well, making them a good substitute for other protein foods that may be high in fat. Beans are also low in calories, low in fat and inexpensive. Mix black beans with corn and salsa for an easy side dish that is delicious and nutritious.



**Walnuts.** These nuts contain more omega-3 fatty acids than any other tree nuts or peanuts. Omega-3 fatty acids help boost cardiovascular health and decrease inflammation related to diseases, and may improve cognitive function, as well. Walnuts also have monounsaturated fat, a heart-healthy fat that can help lower blood cholesterol. Sprinkle on a salad or enjoy a handful as a snack.



**Oats.** A bowl of oatmeal is a great start to the day. Oatmeal provides soluble fiber, which can help lower blood cholesterol. This whole grain provides protein for muscle recovery and repair and contains some antioxidants, which may have cardiovascular benefits. Try adding oats to some of your recipes, including casseroles, meatloaf, muffins, breads and cookies.



**Yogurt.** Low-fat or fat-free yogurt can serve as a snack or part of dessert. Yogurt has live cultures and good bacteria that may promote health, boost immunity and increase bone health. Some of the nutrients in yogurt include calcium and potassium, which are important for good bone health. Plus, yogurt contains protein, which helps you stay full longer. Top yogurt with blueberries and walnuts for a nutritious snack or breakfast. Yogurt can also serve as the base for creamy dips or dressings.



**Tomatoes.** Fresh tomatoes may not be available year-round, but processed tomato products, such as stewed tomatoes, tomato sauce and tomato juice, can be found any time of year. Their red color comes from lycopene, a beneficial phytochemical the body absorbs better from processed tomato products. Lycopene can help prevent prostate cancer and may improve bone health. Tomatoes also contain vitamins A and C, both of which are antioxidants. Add cherry tomatoes to a salad or eat them as a snack, or add a can of stewed tomatoes to chili.



**Carrots.** Bugs Bunny probably has great eyesight, thanks to the beta carotene that gives carrots their orange color. Beta carotene helps protect against some cancers and heart disease. This compound can also help protect your lungs, especially if you smoke. In addition, carrots contain vitamin C, vitamin K, fiber and potassium. Add carrots to soups and salads or enjoy as a side dish.

Try to add one or more of these foods to your healthy eating habits, and enjoy the many health benefits from these nutritional all-stars!



## Peach sorbet

**Servings:** 3

**Ingredients:**

- 1 can (16 ounces) sliced or halved peaches in heavy syrup
- 1½ teaspoons vanilla extract

**Directions:**

1. Freeze the unopened can of fruit until frozen solid, roughly 18 to 24 hours.
2. Submerge the unopened frozen can in hot water for 1 to 2 minutes.
3. Open the can, and pour any thawed syrup into a big bowl.
4. Remove the other end of the can, and turn out the fruit onto a cutting surface. Cut peaches into chunks and add to the bowl. Mash with a fork and stir until smooth. Add vanilla and stir thoroughly.
5. Serve immediately, or spoon into a bowl, cover and freeze until ready to serve, up to 8 hours.

Recipe adapted from the Canned Food Alliance, [www.mealtime.org](http://www.mealtime.org)

# Make a mystery meal into a culinary delight

It's time to eat. You open the fridge and find a few random ingredients and some leftovers from earlier in the week. How can you possibly create a meal out of this? Here are some tips to turn a mystery meal of leftovers into a culinary delight.

- 1. Start by looking at what you have on hand.** To save on your grocery bill and avoid food waste, check the leftovers first (but make sure they're still safe to eat). Then see what is on hand in the pantry, refrigerator, and freezer. You may not find an exact recipe to use up these ingredients but choosing a simple meal idea – like a pasta dish, stir-fry, or stew, will give you a framework to follow.
- 2. Choose one or more vegetables.** Fresh vegetables are a great option, but frozen and canned vegetables are also good sources of many nutrients. Cut down on sodium by straining canned vegetables and rinsing them with water or by purchasing low-sodium options in the canned or frozen aisle.
- 3. Add a carbohydrate.** It could be a starchy vegetable like potatoes or beans, or a grain like brown rice, whole-wheat pasta, or couscous.
- 4. Include protein.** Add a little meat, fish, or eggs as a protein source. Fish or chicken canned in water are healthy options. Other items like low-fat, plain yogurt, cottage cheese, and beans are good non-meat sources of protein that can easily be added to entrees or served as a side dish.
- 5. Dairy foods or fruit can be included to flavor the meal or as part of a sauce.** Add berries or grapes to a salad. Use plain Greek yogurt in place of sour cream on tacos or as the base of homemade ranch dressing.
- 6. Next look for the spices, sauce, or condiments that will transform an ordinary meal into something extraordinary.** Sauces can be ready-to-eat — like a jar of spaghetti sauce — or easy to create by using ingredients on hand, like a can of stewed tomatoes or nut butter and soy sauce. Enhance frozen or boxed meals by mixing in chopped veggies, bits of leftover meat, or various herbs and spices. For example, add shredded apples and cinnamon when making pancakes, sprinkle green pepper and onion on a frozen pizza, or add butternut squash to macaroni and cheese. Sometimes a little variety in seasonings and ingredients is all you need to keep home-cooked meals interesting and delicious!



# Meal planning

**B**usy schedules can make it challenging to provide healthy, timely, and inexpensive meals for today's families. Between sports practices and games, band performances, dance competitions, and community events and meetings, etc., we often find ourselves in the drive-thru lane at the nearest fast-food chain. While it is okay to dine out every once in a while, hitting the drive-thru most nights of the week shouldn't become a habit. When it does, not only are you consuming excess calories, fat and sodium, but you are also missing a great opportunity to bond with your kids in the kitchen.

A healthier option is to take time each week to plan quick, healthy, and easy to prepare meals. Here are tips for budget-friendly, time-saving meals.

- **Choose one day a week to menu plan.** Saturdays or Sundays work best for most busy families. Set aside time that day to look for quick family favorite recipes and plan meals for the entire week. Include family members in the planning.
- **Before planning your meals and hitting the store, inventory what you have on hand.** Check your garden, pantry, freezer, and refrigerator for food you can use that week. This will save you money at the grocery store and reduce food waste. Ask family members to check to see what perishable and non-perishable items may be needed for the menu choices.
- **Consider making your own meal system.** For instance, Meatless Mondays, Taco Tuesdays or Slow-Cooker Wednesdays, Pasta Thursdays, Pizza Fridays, etc. Create your system based on the preferences and nutritional needs of your family. Also remember to include a night for leftovers so you don't waste food or money.
- **Think about the nutritional quality of your meals as you plan.** Half of your plate should be fruits and vegetables. Frozen and canned vegetables are great alternatives when fresh are not in season or too expensive. When choosing canned produce choose those that are lower in sodium and packed in water or light syrup.
- **Buy items at the grocery store that are on sale.** Some items you are looking for may be on sale and others may not. Be flexible with the menu when foods on sale don't match what you planned to make. Choose a different recipe to fit the sale items or you can substitute ingredients. For instance, if you are planning to make tacos, but chicken is on sale instead of ground beef you can make chicken tacos instead.
- **Look for "Manager's Special" or reduced items.** Many of these items are a few days from their expiration or "best-if-used-by" date. You can usually save a substantial amount of money if you purchase these items and work them into your meal plan. Meat can be put in the freezer for later use. Milk is another item that is sometimes reduced for quick sale. You may be skeptical about keeping milk after the date on the container, but it can be safely stored in the refrigerator for up to seven days past the date on the carton. Buying sale items that are close to their expiration date can be a big money-saver and is certainly worthwhile for those families who will use the food quickly.
- **Use coupons or grocery rebate apps.** Both of these can save you quite a bit of money but be sure you are only purchasing what you need. Offers on rebate apps may look appealing, but if it isn't something in your meal plan for the week, you could be throwing money away by purchasing something you don't need or won't use.



*After grocery shopping, take time to do any prep work you can in advance. Then when it comes time to prepare the meal, you will be able to throw things together in no time.*

- **As you plan meals and shop, choose the healthier options when they are on sale.** For example choose whole wheat pastas instead of regular varieties or the Greek yogurt instead of regular yogurt. By doing this, you will increase the nutritional value of the meals you plan and prepare.
- **After grocery shopping, take time to do prep work in advance.** Most vegetables can be washed and cut in advance. If you buy extra meat, cook and cut the meat to your liking before freezing. When it comes time to prepare the meal, you will be able to throw things together quickly.
- **Choose foods that can be prepared once and used twice.** Use the extra grilled steak or chicken from one meal in a soup, salad, or casserole later in the week. Shred extra beef roast from the slow cooker for BBQ sandwiches or pot pie later in the week.

If you simply cannot avoid the drive-thru line, help your children pick healthy options and be sure to model that behavior as well. Grilled chicken, salads, fruit, and milk are some of the healthier options now offered at many fast-food chains.

# Make the most of your food dollars

If it feels like you are bringing home fewer bags of food from the grocery store for the money that you spend, you may be correct. It probably comes as no surprise that food is the third-highest household expenditure for most families. Although we can't stop buying food or make prices go down, we can pay attention to our food budgeting techniques, shop wisely and manage the food we have on hand to get the best value for our money that is spent.

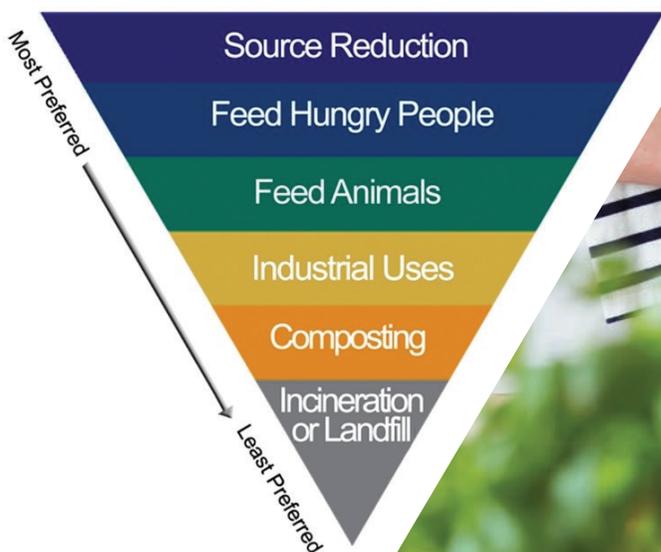
The first thing we can do to save money on food is to make sure we eat all the food we purchase. This may sound obvious, but according to the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA), approximately 133 billion pounds of food (equaling \$161 billion dollars) is wasted by retailers and consumers. The average household of four typically throws away about \$1,500 worth of food in a year. In the big picture, this means that approximately 30-40% of the US food supply is lost through waste.

The best approach to reducing food loss and waste is to not create it in the first place. To aid in this effort, the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) created the food recovery hierarchy to show the most effective ways to address food waste.

Consider these practical tips to help you reduce food waste AND save money on your food budget:

1. **Plan your meals.** At a minimum, plan for a week but you can do longer if that fits your lifestyle. As you make your plan, take note of what foods you have in your refrigerator, freezer and pantry that need to be used before they spoil.
2. **Check the grocery ads.** This can either be print ads that come through a mailer or online ads associated with a store loyalty card. If you haven't enrolled in your store's loyalty program, you might be missing out on savings on some of your frequent purchases.
3. **Make a grocery list.** Fill in any ingredient gaps in your menu plan. Try to organize your list by departments in your store (produce, bread, meat, dairy) as this can help keep you from wandering the aisles. As you shop stick to your list, and don't get sidetracked by 'special sales' that may or may not be a good value - this is why you checked the sale ads first.

## Food Recovery Hierarchy



4. **Shop once a week.** More frequent shopping often leads to more impulse purchases. By starting with a menu plan and a list, you can be more efficient with your weekly shopping. Also try to shop alone to stay focused on your list and avoid shopping when you are hungry.
  5. **Buy fruits and vegetables in multiple forms.** Purchasing fresh produce items when they are in season is usually when they are cheapest. Fresh fruit and vegetables represent some of our largest food waste, so buy only what you can use before it goes bad. Save money by comparing fresh, frozen, and canned fruits and vegetables to get your best value. Consider generic or store brand products, which have improved in quality over the years. In many cases, generic products are made by brand-name manufacturers, but cost considerably less.
  6. **Use unit pricing when comparing products.** When products come in different sized containers, the lowest priced product might not actually be the cheapest. By applying some simple math or using the unit pricing tag on store shelves will help when comparing products. To calculate this, divide the total cost by the common unit. For example: Rice A costs \$1.59 for a 1-pound bag (\$1.59 per pound), whereas Rice B costs \$3.99 for a 5-pound bag (\$3.99/5 equals about \$0.80 per pound). Rice B is cheaper.
  7. **Be wise to product placement.** Don't fall for the "10 for \$10" sales that might be on an end-of-aisle display. Be a smart consumer and check the prices on similar products, as that 'deal' might not be such a great deal after all. In some cases, you don't even need to buy 10 items to get the sale price. You also want to consider whether you will use all of the items before they expire.
  8. **Know what the product date means:** If you have been confused by dates printed on food product labels, you are not alone. With the exception of infant formula, product dating is not required by federal regulation. Manufacturers provide dating to help retailers and consumers decide when food is at the best quality. These are some of the more commonly used phrases on food products.
    - **"Best if Used By/Before"** date indicates when a product will be of best flavor or quality. It is not a purchase or safety date.
    - **"Sell-By"** date tells the store how long to display the product for sale for inventory management. It is not a safety date.
    - **"Use-By"** date is the last date recommended for the use of the product while at peak quality. It is not a safety date except for when used on infant formula as described below.
    - **"Freeze-By"** date indicates when a product should be frozen to maintain peak quality. It is not a purchase or safety date.

For detailed guidance on safe food storage, check out this free app that can be downloaded to your phone: <https://www.foodsafety.gov/keep-food-safe/foodkeeper-app>
  9. **Think planned-overs.** To help keep from throwing food away, plan to use leftovers as easy lunches or save several nights of extras for a buffet night. Keep a plastic container in the freezer to hold leftover vegetables and when it gets full, you are on your way to a pot of vegetable soup. Leftover fruits can be frozen for smoothies or chopped and added to muffins.
  10. **Consider growing your own.** Growing a garden has the potential to reduce the amount of money spent on groceries. But this "potential" depends on many variables, including the types and amounts of vegetables grown, product yield from the garden, available space, and weather conditions as well as cost of seeds, bedding plants and watering. If you want to try growing your own, tomatoes and peppers are fairly simple and can be grown in small spaces – even in pots on the patio.
- As with any habit changes you try to make, don't try to implement everything at once. Choose just one or two tips to start with and when those become routine, choose another to work on. If you aren't already doing it, meal planning and grocery lists are the easiest place to start.

Sources: <https://www.fda.gov/food/consumers/food-loss-and-waste>

# Healthy snacks for older adults

Healthy eating habits are crucial for maintaining balanced blood sugar levels, healthy vision, a positive mood, good sleep, energy, bone and muscle strength and proper digestion. Make selecting the right snacks one of those healthy habits.

A number of issues can affect your diet as you get older: You might have problems chewing or swallowing, or have a chronic health condition that requires you to reduce the amount of fat, sugar and/or salt you consume. You may not be able to cook, or no longer live in your own home with your own kitchen. Emotional issues also may take their toll on your appetite.

Nutritious “grab-and-go” snacks can help you maintain healthy eating habits even with a diminished appetite.

## Make Snacks Count

Which healthy snacks you should choose depends in part on health issues, such as the ability to chew well, doctor recommendations, dietary restrictions, medications and allergies.

Though it’s common for older adults to snack continuously throughout the day, this snacking may sometimes be unhealthy. We all know that most prepackaged snack foods

lack any nutritional value, which is why we call them “empty calories.” Moreover, the sugar, bad fats and carbs in them are detrimental to an older person’s sensitive health, and can lead to all sorts of nutritional problems.

Replace those empty-calorie snacks with colorful fruits and veggies, providing an abundance of key nutrients. Dips made with plain Greek yogurt or peanut butter can add both calories and protein to your healthy diet.

Try using new seasonings — going easy on the salt — to spice up a snack and offset any decline in your sense of taste that you may be experiencing.

## Healthy snack choices

Look for low-salt or no-salt snacks as often as possible, as well as reduced- or no-sugar foods. Also, make sure to choose foods that contain healthy oils, such as canola or olive, rather than trans or saturated fats.

Consider creating your own snacks using “whole” or natural foods. A snack bag with pretzels and raisins, a handful of non-salted almonds or walnuts, lightly salted popcorn, or whole grain crackers with cheese or tuna can help if you’re struggling to get enough calories or wanting a light snack to hold off hunger.



# 24 tips for packing a healthy, affordable lunch



**Y**ou probably go to great lengths during the school year to ensure your child has the right equipment — pens, notebooks, clothing — to make it through the day. Proper nutrition is also a key ingredient for school success because it fuels brain cells and gives your child the energy and nutrients he or she needs for optimal learning. Packing your child's lunch lets you know exactly what he or she is eating. Follow these tips and not only will you save money, you will also pack a nutritious lunch that your child will enjoy.

## Save money

- 1. Invest in a good container.** Choose an insulated bag and freezer packs to keep food at a safe temperature.
- 2. Use washable and reusable containers.** Avoid using plastic sandwich baggies. Buy containers in a variety of sizes to fit your lunchbox needs.
- 3. Buy in bulk.** Avoid single-serve packaging. You save money when you buy food in bulk and pack it yourself into single servings. Buy a large container of yogurt or pudding and use 4-ounce containers to pack your own. Buy a block of cheese and cut it into cubes or shred it. Buy crackers in boxes, rather than individual packages.
- 4. Make your own.** Look beyond lunch meat. Slice your own meat or grilled chicken breast and cut it into strips or cubes. Avoid prepackaged lunches since they are high-priced.
- 5. Plan to pack leftovers.** Invest in a good insulated food container to keep food warm. Homemade soup is always a good option.
- 6. Buy what is on sale and use coupons.** Get whatever is on sale each week and work it into a menu. Use fruits and vegetables that are in season.
- 7. Buy store-brand food and compare unit prices.**
- 8. Look high and low** — bargains are usually on the top or bottom shelves, not at eye level.
- 9. Plan ahead and have a list when you go to the store.** The more time you spend in a store, the more money you spend.

## Make it nutritious

- 10. Pack a rainbow!** Provide a variety of options — the more color, the more nutrients.
- 11. A healthy lunch should contain foods from each of the five food groups:** grains, protein, dairy, fruits and vegetables. Choose whole-grain products like bread, tortillas, pita bread, bagels or whole-grain crackers. These are more nutritious; have more fiber, vitamins and minerals; and keep blood sugar steady for optimal learning.

- 12. Select protein foods wisely.** Use lean meat like chicken or turkey breast, hard-boiled eggs, tuna packed in water, beans or peanut butter. Protein in every meal helps keep blood sugar steady.
- 13. Buy fruits and vegetables that are in season** and serve them creatively. Examples include baby carrots with yogurt dip or other cut vegetables with low-fat dip or hummus.
- 14. Choose low-fat or fat-free dairy products** like yogurt, milk and cheese. These are great calcium and protein sources.
- 15. For side items, rethink that bag of chips.** Instead, choose carrot sticks, celery sticks with peanut butter and raisins, apple slices with peanut butter, fruit salad, whole fruit, raisins or pretzels.
- 16. For dessert, think beyond the cookie.** Try whole-grain graham crackers, ginger snaps, raisins, unsweetened applesauce, homemade muffins or fresh fruit.
- 17. Choose a beverage that hydrates,** like water, or choose low-fat or fat-free milk for additional protein, calcium and vitamin D. Avoid drinks with calories and no nutrients.

## Make it fun

- 18. Add some fun touches to the meal.** The traditional peanut butter and jelly sandwich can become pretty boring. Get a couple of cookie cutters and have kids cut the sandwich into different shapes.
- 19. Include the kids in the preparation process and give them choices.** Take them along when grocery shopping. Let them pick one new fruit or vegetable each week that they would like to try. Let them help pack their lunch.
- 20. Think beyond bread** when making sandwiches. Think whole-grain bagels, whole-grain pita wraps and whole-wheat tortillas. A good alternative is a whole-wheat pita pocket with hummus, shredded vegetables and grilled chicken strips.

- 21. Pack a variety of options** to keep a child's interest. Avoid packing the same lunch every day — this helps prevent kids from getting bored.
- 22. Vary the preparation.** Try grilled or baked, chopped or grated, plain or with a dip.
- 23. Practice good nutrition yourself.** Children learn by association — you need to be a role model. Discuss with them the benefits of healthy eating.
- 24. Don't get discouraged if your child rejects a food** on first taste. It can take 15 to 20 tries before a child gets used to a new food.

*A nutritious lunch does not have to be boring or cost you a fortune. Making small changes can save you money. Try one or two tips each week and soon you should see some relief in your grocery bills. Remember that well-nourished children have a greater chance of success at school because they have the fuel and the energy they need to play and learn.*



# Add flavor — not carcinogens — to your cookouts

**G**athering family and friends to fire up the grill has become something of a national mealtime tradition. And, with good reason. The intense, direct heat of grilling gives food a wonderful crusty texture and flavor that many of us love.

Grilled foods can thank the Maillard reaction for the great flavor. The Maillard reaction happens when heat, proteins and sugars in food react in a process to create hundreds of different flavor compounds, giving each food distinctive flavors.

The Maillard reaction can occur with any piece of food, not just meats, depending on the food's protein and carbohydrate content. This is why grilled vegetables are so sweet and delicious.

The Maillard reaction can develop when food is cooked at lower temperatures over a longer period, but it really kicks in above 300°F. It may take meat hours to brown at 250°F in the oven as deeply as 15 minutes on a grill, and the mixture of flavor compounds will differ. As temperatures increase, caramelization becomes more pronounced, intensifying the flavor.

Unfortunately, at high temperatures, proteins in meat, chicken and fish can naturally form carcinogenic compounds called heterocyclic amines (HCAs) and polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs). Carcinogens are substances which may cause cancer. The HCA carcinogenic compounds can also be formed when cooking indoors using high-temperature cooking methods. PAHs are found in smoked foods, which includes when juices from meat, poultry, and fish drip onto hot coals or flames (causing smoke). This is especially likely if the meat is charred, which reduces the overall quality and taste of the food.

## To avoid charring:

- Thaw meat in the refrigerator before grilling so that it cooks evenly. Trim the fat and remove the skin from the meat before cooking so juices will not drip.
- Marinating meat in an acidic liquid and oil for at least 30 minutes before grilling can reduce HCA formation.
- Cook foods near the outside of the flame rather than directly over it. You can also move hot coals to the sides of the grill to cook over a bare center with a hot surface.
- Flip your meat frequently, and use a thermometer to monitor the internal temperatures of food in order to avoid undercooking or overcooking and charring.
- Try partially precooking meat on a stovetop and immediately finishing by grilling to cut back on grill time, reducing the amount of possible carcinogens.
- If meat does char, scrape off the charred areas before eating.



**If you love to grill and plan to do it often, be sure to follow these tips:**

- Use long tongs to turn solid food. Forks will pierce food and cause juices to drip. Juices dripping on coals can also cause flames to flare.
- Use spatulas for turning foods such as burgers and fish so the food holds together. A large spatula with a stiff, thin blade works well.
- Keep a squirt bottle with water handy to put out flare-ups and reduce char on food.
- Use vegetable cooking spray or aluminum foil on grill racks for easy cleanup.
- Heat the grill for 10-15 minutes before adding food.
- Keep about three-fourths of an inch between foods to ensure even cooking.
- To avoid overcooking, remove each food item when it's done and keep it warm while remaining food continues to cook. Always have an extra clean plate or platter handy. Don't put cooked meat on the same dish that held raw meat.
- Dry spice rubs can boost grilling flavor, but you should wait to add sticky sauces until just before serving, since they will char easily.

*Experiment with grilling! In addition to the standard burgers, steaks and chicken, try vegetables, fruit, pizza and fish on the grill.*

## Grilled Vegetable Packets

**Servings:** 5

**Ingredients:**

- 2 zucchini, small (sliced)
- 2 yellow squash, small (sliced)
- 4 red potatoes, small (scrubbed well and sliced)
- ½ red onion (sliced)
- ½ bell pepper (red or green, seeded and sliced)
- ¼ cup Italian salad dressing, light salt and pepper (optional, to taste)

**Directions:**

1. Wash hands with soap and water.
2. Heat grill to medium heat or 350 degrees.
3. Wash vegetables and slice.
4. Toss in a large bowl. Add dressing and toss until all vegetables are coated.
5. Tear 2 large squares of aluminum foil and place half of the vegetable mixture on each piece. Place an equal piece of foil over the top of vegetable mixture and fold bottom piece with top sheet to form a packet.
6. Place on heated grill for 20-30 minutes or until the potatoes are tender. If you don't have a grill bake Veggie Packets in the oven at 400 degrees for 20-30 minutes.
7. Before you open the packets, poke holes in the foil with a fork. Be very careful opening the foil as the steam will be very hot and could burn you!
8. Empty vegetables onto serving plate or serve from foil packets.



# Tomatoes

Tomatoes are among the most readily available and versatile vegetables. Or are they a fruit? Nutritionally and culinary-wise, tomatoes are considered a vegetable because of the way they are used and their nutrients. Botanically speaking, tomatoes are more of a fruit.

Either way, this fruit/vegetable is high in nutrients and easy to use in many dishes.

Tomatoes are high in vitamin C, an antioxidant that is good for our skin, helps with healing and helps gums stay healthy. Foods with vitamin C also help the body absorb iron, so tomatoes are a favorite paired with meat or plant foods with iron. Tomatoes also have potassium, which helps lower blood pressure, magnesium, which is good for bone health, and fiber.



Lycopene is another nutrient found in tomatoes. This antioxidant boosts health and is especially important for men's prostate health. Processed and cooked tomato products — such as tomato paste, tomato sauce, ketchup or salsa — have the most lycopene. Heating and processing techniques make this nutrient more readily available for the body, but heating diminishes the vitamin C content. Enjoy eating fresh as well as cooked and processed tomatoes to get all their beneficial nutrients.

Tomatoes are in season from July to October, so that's when you will find the best quality and prices. Locally-produced tomatoes are a tasty favorite in the summer. You can find tomatoes year-round in grocery stores, but prices and quality will vary.

Tomatoes should be stored at room temperature for up to a week. If they are not fully ripe, they will continue to ripen if they are stored out of the sun at room temperature. Make sure to rinse tomatoes with water before cutting or serving.

Tomatoes are versatile; you can eat them in many different ways. Add chopped tomatoes to a salad or pizza, slice



tomatoes for your sandwiches or pair them with mozzarella cheese for a snack. You can make your own pasta sauce, soup or salsa using fresh tomatoes. They can be roasted in the oven or on the grill, or stuffed with anything you enjoy.

MU Extension has many publications available to help you learn more about tomatoes, including:

- Growing Home Garden Tomatoes  
<http://extension.missouri.edu/p/G6461>
- How to Can Fresh Tomato Products  
<https://extension.missouri.edu/publications/gh1456>
- How To Freeze Vegetables  
<https://extension.missouri.edu/publications/gh1503>
- "Seasonal and simple: A guide for enjoying fresh fruits and vegetables" (MP909).  
<https://extension.missouri.edu/publications/mp909>

# Seasonal and simple

## A guide for enjoying fresh fruits and vegetables

The Seasonal and Simple website is FREE and available online at <http://seasonalandsimple.info/>

It is based on the MU Extension publication, “Seasonal and simple: A guide for enjoying fresh fruits and vegetables.” The “Seasonal and Simple” website offers information on a variety of vegetables and fruits that are grown in Missouri, including familiar produce such as apples and broccoli, as well as some produce that you might not know what to do with, like okra and kohlrabi. It has a chart to show you when each item is in season locally. It also provides nutritional information and explains how to select and prepare the fruit or vegetable, including what parts are edible and how to store each part.

There are a variety of serving suggestions and recipes for each vegetable or fruit. They include hot and cold options and a mix of cooking methods. Most recipes are pretty simple to make.

### “Find It”

The “Find It” feature enables consumers to find farmers markets in or near each Missouri county.

## Seasonalandsimple.info

*Open Seasonalandsimple.info on your phone at your local farmers market, produce stand or grocery store to know what the perfect fruit or vegetable should look, feel and smell like before you purchase it. You can pick a recipe while you are at the market and get all the ingredients you will need in one trip. Then go home and enjoy your fresh produce in a simple meal or snack.*

### **Seasonalandsimple.info**

is optimized for smartphones and easy to access online. It is based on the MU Extension publication *Seasonal and Simple*, which is a selection, storage and preparation guide for Missouri produce.

### Find it Feature

The “Find It” feature enables consumers to find farmers markets in or near each Missouri county.



## Sweet corn

**In season:** June to September

Sweet corn is a source of potassium, magnesium and fiber. Potassium helps maintain healthy blood pressure, magnesium helps build and maintain strong bones and fiber helps control cholesterol and keeps you regular. Sweet corn is also a source of folate, which may reduce your risk of heart disease. Eating foods with folate before pregnancy helps lower the risk of delivering a baby with neural tube defects.

**Store:**

Refrigerate cobs in husks.

**Prepare:**

To shuck corn, pull the husks down and snap off the stem at the base. To remove silk, rub the ear in a circular direction under cold running water or use a vegetable brush.

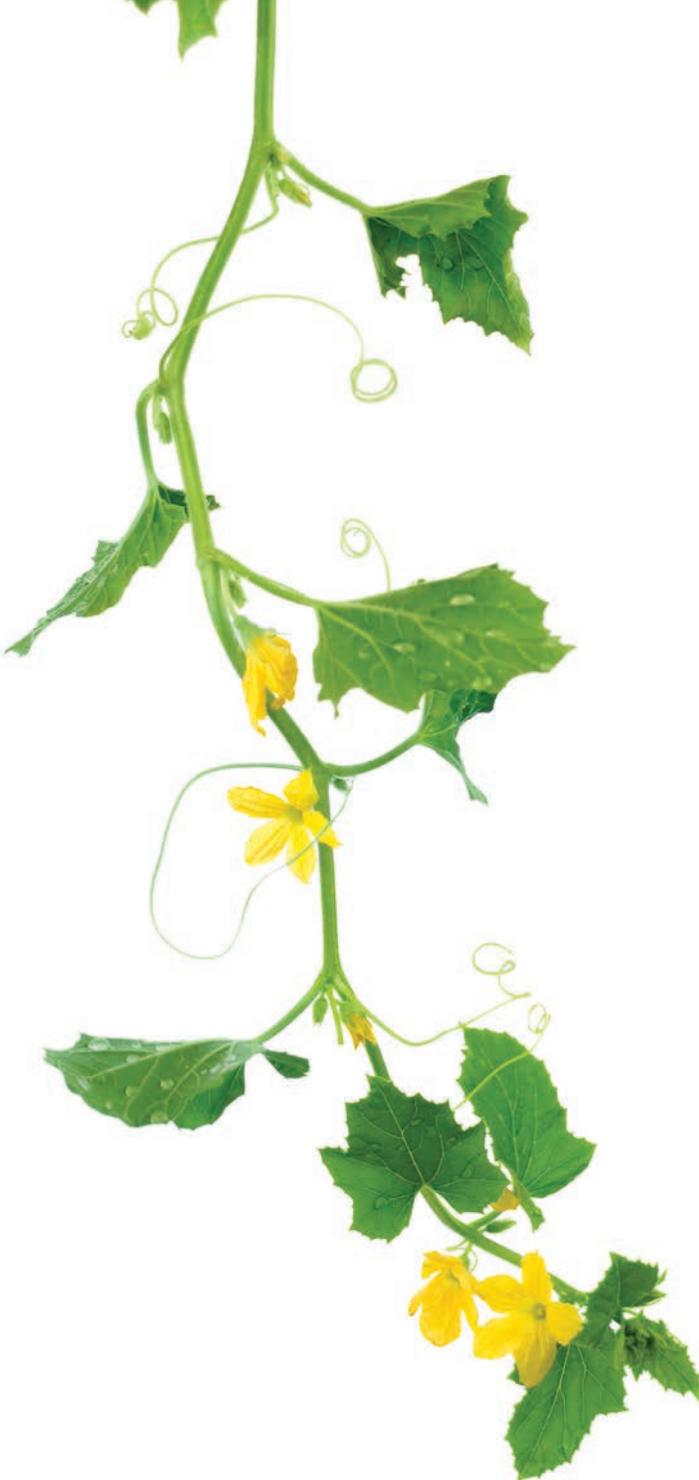
To find recipes using sweet corn as well as other seasonal produce, order "Seasonal and simple: A guide for enjoying fresh fruits and vegetables" (MP909) from MU Extension publications at

<http://extension.missouri.edu/p/MP909>.

*Kernels should be large enough so that they are compact and have no space between the rows.*

*Choose corn in fresh-looking green husks that has well-developed kernels.*





## Cucumbers

**In season:** July to October

Cucumbers provide potassium, vitamin K, magnesium and fiber. Potassium helps maintain healthy blood pressure, vitamin K and magnesium help build and maintain strong bones and fiber helps control cholesterol and keeps you regular. Most of the nutrients in a cucumber are found in the skin.

**Store:**

Unwashed cucumbers in a moisture-proof bag in the refrigerator for up to 1 week.

**Prepare:**

Rinse cucumbers in cool running water. Wipe off any visible dirt. You may wish to remove the seeds of more mature cucumbers by slicing lengthwise and scooping seeds out with a spoon.

*Choose firm, green and slender cucumbers.*

*Avoid cucumbers that have soft spots or wrinkled skin.*



**Serving suggestions:**

Add sliced cucumbers to salads or sandwiches. Chop or grate and season with yogurt and vinegar or lemon, dill or tarragon.



## Cucumber dip

**Ingredients:**

- 2 medium cucumbers, peeled, seeded and chopped
- 2 green onions, sliced
- ½ cup plain yogurt
- 2 Tablespoons lemon juice
- 1 Tablespoon cider or white vinegar
- 1 clove garlic, crushed

**Directions:**

1. Process all ingredients in blender until smooth.
2. Chill for at least 10 minutes before serving.



## Cucumber salad

**Ingredients:**

- 2 large cucumbers, peeled, sliced thin
- ¾ cup white vinegar
- ½ cup water
- ½ cup sugar
- Basil

**Directions:**

1. Combine all ingredients except cucumbers and heat until sugar melts.
2. Pour warm mixture over cucumbers.
3. Store covered in refrigerator.
4. Season with fresh or dried leaf basil.



*Keeping cucumber skins on in your recipes will boost the nutrient value of your meal.*

*Most of the nutrients in a cucumber are found in the skin.*





## Watermelon

**In season:** August to October

Watermelon provides vitamins A and C, which are antioxidants that may reduce your risk of heart disease and certain cancers. Vitamin A helps maintain eye health. Vitamin C helps protect skin from bruising, helps heal cuts and keeps gums healthy. Eating foods with vitamin C helps the body absorb iron. Watermelon also provides potassium and magnesium. Potassium helps maintain healthy blood pressure, and magnesium helps build and maintain strong bones.

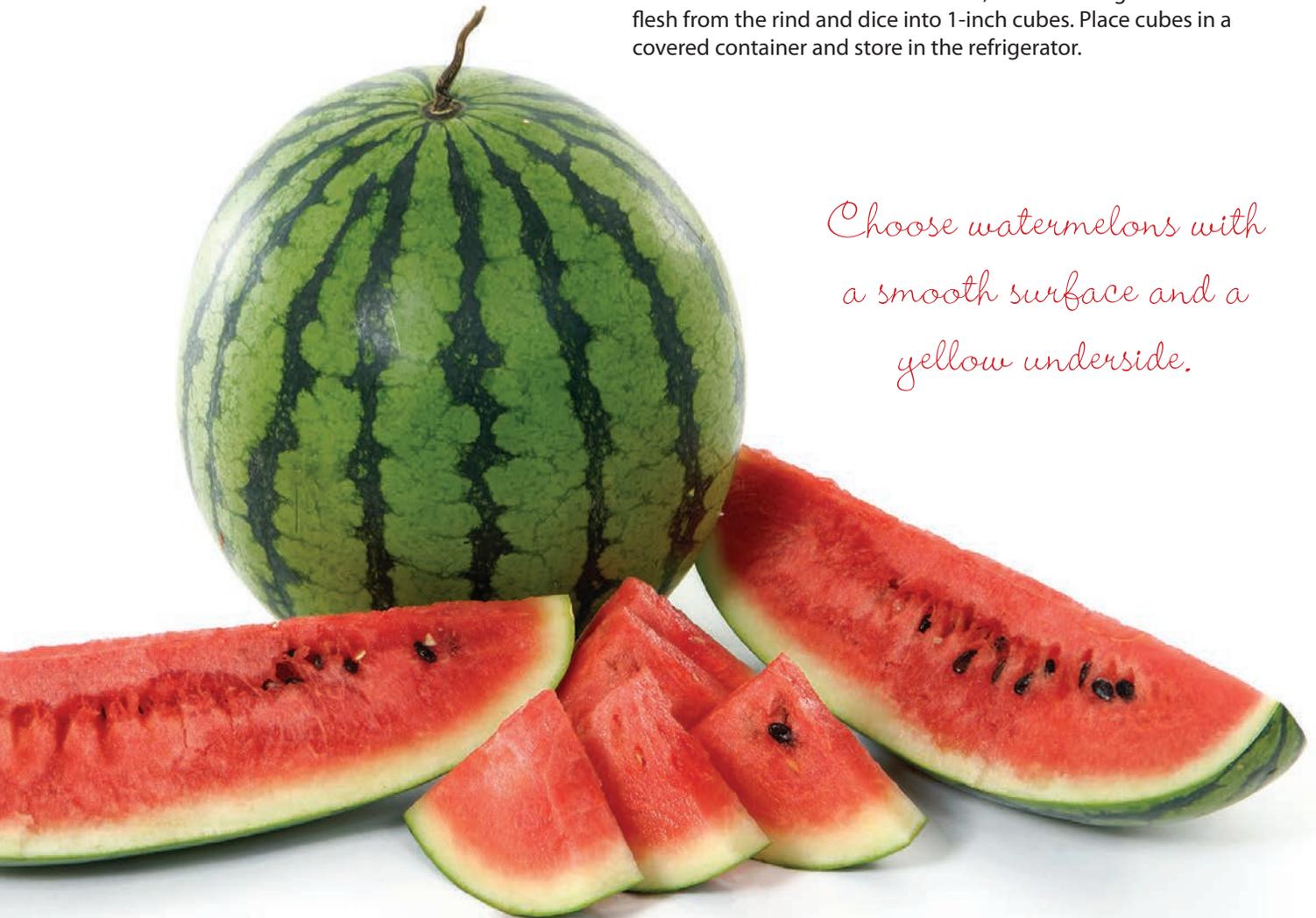
**Store:**

Hold watermelon at room temperature until fully ripened and then refrigerate for up to 1 week. Cut watermelon can be stored in the refrigerator for 3 to 4 days.

**Prepare:**

Wash the outside of the watermelon, cut into wedges or cut the flesh from the rind and dice into 1-inch cubes. Place cubes in a covered container and store in the refrigerator.

*Choose watermelons with a smooth surface and a yellow underside.*



**Serving suggestions:**

Add watermelon to chicken, tuna and rice salads, or mix some watermelon into salsa to take the heat off the salsa.

Puree watermelon and freeze to use as ice cubes in your favorite drink.



## Watermelon for breakfast

**Ingredients:**

- $\frac{3}{4}$  cup seeded watermelon chunks, cut into small pieces
- $\frac{1}{3}$  cup low-fat granola
- 5 ounces low-fat yogurt

**Directions:**

1. Layer watermelon and yogurt. Top with granola.



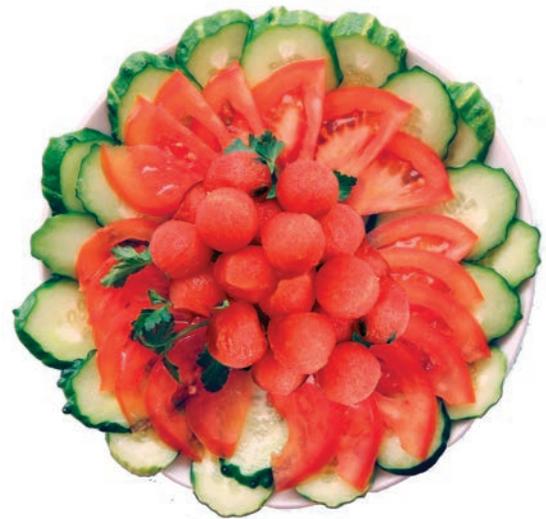
## Watermelon, cucumber and tomato salad

**Ingredients:**

- 2 cups watermelon, seeded and diced
- 4 small tomatoes, each cut into 8 pieces
- 1 cucumber, peeled, halved lengthwise and cut into  $\frac{1}{2}$ -inch pieces
- 2 Tablespoons olive oil
- $\frac{1}{4}$  cup fresh basil leaves, slivered

**Directions:**

1. In a colander, drain the watermelon, tomatoes and cucumber.
2. Place in bowl and toss with the olive oil and basil.



*Mix watermelon with other fruit and yogurt for a smoothie.*





## Using herbs to add flavor

When you think of seasonings, salt and pepper are often the first ones that come to mind. But there are many other seasonings, including herbs, that can be homegrown. Common herbs include basil, marjoram, mint, oregano, rosemary, sage, thyme, dill, aniseed, caraway, coriander, cumin, fennel, and parsley.

Download a free copy of the University of Missouri Extension publication, *Growing Herbs at Home* (G6470), to learn how to grow and harvest herbs. Herbs can be refrigerated, frozen, or dried to prolong their use. A tablespoon of fresh herbs has about the same flavoring ability as a teaspoon of dried herbs. In general, the older the herb, the less fragrance or flavor it will add to food.

- Chopping fresh herbs helps to release their flavor. Use kitchen scissors or a sharp knife to chop them without crushing the leaves.
- The heat involved in cooking helps free the essential oils that give herbs their wonderful fragrances and flavors.
- To trap these flavors, keep the pot covered when you're cooking liquids with herbs in them, such as spaghetti sauce or soups.
- Do not add fresh herbs and spices during the hottest part of the cooking process. If you'll be using high heat, wait to add your seasonings until the dish is simmering or towards the **end** of the cooking process.
- There is an exception, when adding dried herbs to slow-cooked dishes like stews or soups. Incorporate them early on, so they have time to rehydrate and add their flavor throughout the dish.

- Add herbs early when you are preparing cold dishes to allow enough time for flavors to spread throughout the food.

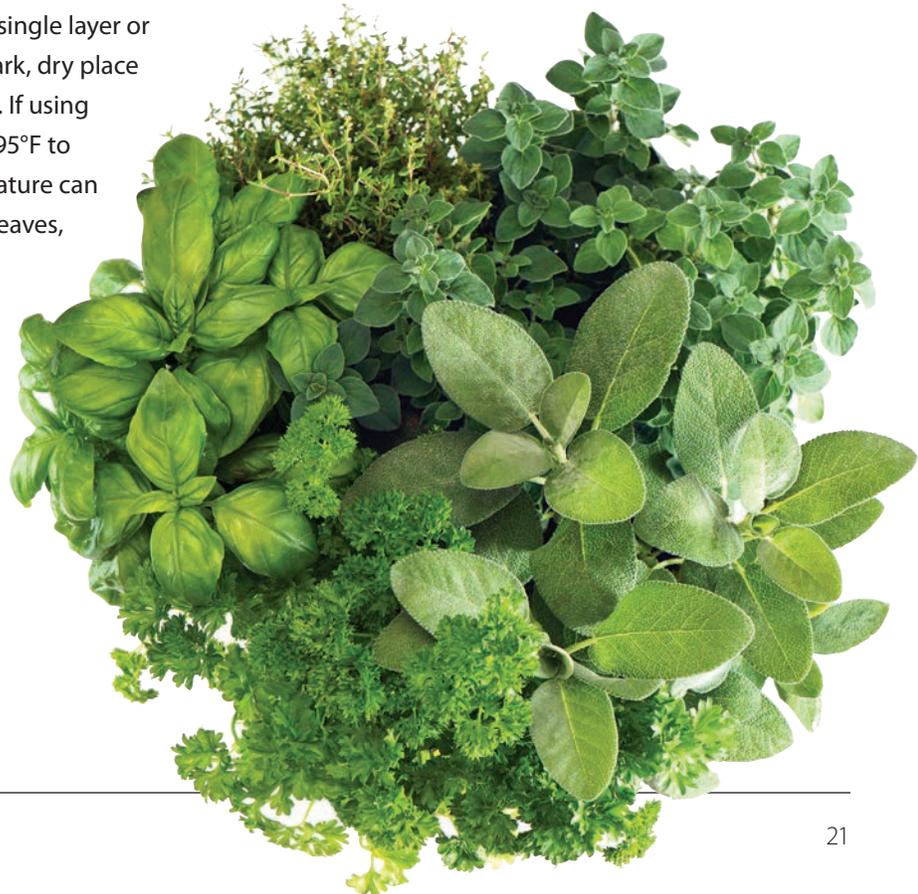
**Storing herbs well can prolong their shelf life and keep them flavorful:**

- You can store fresh herbs for up to a week by snipping the ends of their stems, wrapping them in wet paper towels, placing them in a plastic bag and keeping them in the produce bin of the refrigerator.
- If you have more fresh herbs than you can use, you can dry or freeze the rest for later use. Start by washing the plants in cool water and gently patting them dry.
  - **To freeze herbs**, there are a couple options. You can strip the leaves off the stems and place them in the freezer in a single layer on a cookie sheet; or you can crush the leaves and freeze them in ice cube trays, with the option of adding water or oil to each cube, depending on their intended use. Once they're frozen, move the frozen herb leaves or cubes to a freezer container. Be sure to label and date them.
  - **To dry herbs**, spread the leaves out in a single layer or band small bundles and put them in a dark, dry place with good air circulation for several days. If using a dehydrator with the thermostat set to 95°F to 115°F. Drying herbs at too high a temperature can cause flavor loss. Keep herbs with small leaves, like rosemary and oregano, on the stem, and strip the leaves after drying. Dried herbs will last up to one year if stored in airtight containers, out of direct light and away from strong heat. Keeping them dry is also key to retaining their flavor.

Be creative as you experiment with herbs and start by adding in small amounts of herb to a dish. For example, try tossing a few fresh, chopped basil leaves into a salad of spinach or other dark greens — the basil gives enough flavor that little, if any salad dressing is needed. Adding aniseed or dill to spring vegetables creates a new taste sensation. Put dried tarragon or sage in a shaker to sprinkle on chicken or turkey instead of salt.

For more ideas, download a free copy of an MU Extension publication titled *Herbs and Spices* (N362), which has lists of common herbs and spice and the best foods or dishes in which to use them.

*Use herbs to season food and find new and enjoyable flavors, while avoiding or reducing your use of such unhealthy flavoring options as salt or salad dressings.*



# Brussel sprouts can be a nutritious treat

**B**russels sprouts, the green cruciferous vegetables sometimes referred to by children as “cannon balls,” are not typically a favorite from the vegetable group. But when they are selected well, eaten soon after they are picked and cooked properly, they can be a nutritious treat.

Like many vegetables, Brussels sprouts are low-fat, low-calorie and very low-sodium, and provide a good source of dietary fiber, folate, vitamin C and vitamin K.

Brussels sprouts grow in an interesting manner. Best harvested when they are about an inch in diameter, the sprouts, or small cabbage-shaped heads, grow in clusters up a central, woody stalk. They should be harvested from the bottom up, as the heads form and grow. Choose tight bright green heads, free of yellowing leaves. When the sprouts get too big, they can get bitter like their cruciferous cousins, such as broccoli, cabbage, cauliflower, horseradish or kale.

You can store fresh Brussels sprouts in cold, moist storage (32 to 40 degrees F and 90 to 95 percent relative humidity) in a perforated plastic bag for up to three weeks. If you have more than you can use in that amount of time, they do freeze well.

To freeze, select green, firm and compact heads. Trim, removing coarse outer leaves. Wash them thoroughly and immerse them in brine (4 teaspoons salt to 1 gallon of water) for 30 minutes to remove insects. Sort into small, medium and large sizes. Water blanch small heads for 3 minutes, medium heads for 4 minutes and large heads for 5 minutes. Cool promptly, drain, package, seal and freeze.

You can enjoy Brussels sprouts in a variety of ways. Try...

- ...roasting halved Brussels sprouts in olive oil at 400 degrees F until lightly browned (30-40 minutes).
- ...grilling them on a vegetable kebab.
- ...sautéing Brussels sprouts with garlic and onion, and tossing them with vinegar and Parmesan cheese.
- ...stir-fried Brussels sprouts.
- ...adding chopped Brussels sprouts to a potpie recipe.
- ...broiling them with a mustard glaze.



## Roasted brussel sprouts

**Servings:** 6

**Ingredients:**

- 6 cups Brussels sprouts
- 1 Tablespoon vegetable oil
- $\frac{1}{8}$  teaspoon salt
- $\frac{1}{8}$  teaspoon black pepper
- 1 teaspoon lemon juice

**Directions:**

1. Wash hands with soap and water.
2. Preheat oven to 400 degrees F.
3. Wash and trim Brussels sprouts. Cut large Brussels sprouts in half from top to bottom; leave small Brussels sprouts whole.
4. In a large bowl, toss Brussels sprouts with the oil, salt, and pepper.
5. Place Brussels sprouts in a single layer on a large baking sheet. Lining the baking sheet with foil or baking parchment will help with clean-up.
6. Roast for 20 to 30 minutes, stirring once after 10 to 15 minutes. Sprouts should be tender and browned.
7. Remove from oven and drizzle with lemon juice.

Roasting Brussels sprouts creates a warm, flavorful, and versatile vegetable dish. This recipe is simple and does not require many ingredients.

Recipe adapted from Food Hero, Oregon State University Cooperative Extension Service



Like many vegetables, Brussels sprouts are low-fat, low-calorie and very low-sodium, and provide a good source of dietary fiber, folate, vitamin C and vitamin K.

# Preserving your garden bounty

There's nothing like a meal featuring vegetables you grew and nurtured in your garden. Enjoy your homegrown produce all year long by canning, freezing or drying produce when it's plentiful.

Each preservation method has its own pros and cons.

When making a decision about how to preserve your food, consider the equipment required, the preparation and processing times, the nutrient value of the foods and the convenience of preparation for you after the food has been preserved.

## Canning

The process of canning heats foods to temperatures that inactivate enzymes and destroy microorganisms that could cause illness or food spoilage.

Heat during the canning process forces air out of the jar, and a vacuum seal is formed as the jar cools. This

seal prevents air, which can contain microorganisms, from getting back into the food.

Boiling water or steam canning is recommended only for jams, jellies, fruit, tomatoes and pickles. All other vegetables, meat and poultry should be processed in a pressure canner.

Pressure canning does cause some loss of vitamins and minerals, due to the high levels of heat it uses. Some of the vitamins and minerals are lost in the fluid within the jar, so using the fluid helps assure you receive the food's maximum nutrient value.

## Freezing

Freezing foods stops the growth of microorganisms, but does not destroy them.

Enzymes are proteins produced by the cell of the plant. One thing enzymes are responsible for is the maturation

of the plant's fruit. Enzymes must be inactivated before foods are frozen to prevent undesirable changes in flavor, color and texture.

You can achieve this by blanching for a specified amount of time. If done correctly, this preservation process assures maximum nutrient retention in the food.

## Dehydration

Dehydration is among the oldest methods of food preservation. The process of drying removes the moisture from the food so that microorganisms cannot grow and spoil the food.

Some common dried foods include jerky, fruit leathers and fruit pieces.

The only equipment you need to dry these and other foods is a dehydrator or an oven. Foods preserved by drying are lightweight and don't need much storage space.

## Freezing green beans

1. Select young, tender pods when the seed is first formed. Wash in cold water and cut into 1-inch or 2-inch pieces.
2. Water blanch 3 minutes: Lower beans into boiling water. Place lid on pan; start counting blanching time as soon as the water returns to a boil. Keep heat high to keep water continuously boiling.
3. Remove beans from boiling water and promptly cool in an ice water bath until cool.
4. Drain, pack (removing as much air as possible), label it with what the item is and the date, and seal. Ready for the freezer.



## Freezing corn on the cob

1. Husk and trim ears of corn, remove silks and wash.
2. Water blanch for recommended times:
  - Small ears (1¼-inch diameter): 7 minutes
  - Medium ears (1¼-inch to 1½-inch diameter): 9 minutes
  - Large ears (more than 1½-inch diameter): 11 minutes
3. To blanch, lower cobs into boiling water. Place lid on pan; start counting blanching time as soon as the water returns to a boil. Keep heat high to keep water continuously boiling.
4. Remove ears from boiling water, and promptly cool in an ice water bath until cob is cool (sometimes as long as blanching time).
5. Drain, pack (removing as much air as possible), label it what the item is and the date, and seal. Ready for the freezer.

When you're ready to cook it, thaw corn on the cob partially in the refrigerator so that the cob will get hot during cooking. Boil in hot water or cook in covered dish in microwave until heated through.



### Quality for Keeps:

## Home Food Preservation Workshops

Those who are new to home food preservation or those who would like to update their skills will receive the benefit of learning these processes in a group setting. A major goal of the workshops is to increase participants' confidence in safely preserving food on their own.



### Find a Workshop

[extension.missouri.edu/  
programs/food-preservation](https://extension.missouri.edu/programs/food-preservation)

- Hands-on learning experiences
- Food preservation workshops in your area
- Free food preservations publications
- Free bi-monthly food preservation newsletter
- and other resources.

# Electric pressure cookers

Several years ago, electric pressure cookers or electric multi-cookers burst onto the scene and quickly became one of the most popular new kitchen appliances. Their promise to speed up weeknight meal preparation and make dinner a breeze to prepare in one pot, appealed to home cooks everywhere. All these years later, many electric pressure/multi-cookers have yet to leave the box they were purchased in.

Their owners often feel confused on how to use them. While these appliances may not make weeknight meal preparation a breeze, they can certainly speed it up, and could become one of your most utilized kitchen appliances.

Electric pressure cookers are stand-alone electrical appliances that pressure cook food, but also have other functions, such as slow cooking, yogurt making, and even steaming rice. The idea behind an electric multi-cooker

is that it can replace several different kitchen appliances with one machine.

To understand how to use your electric pressure cooker, you first need to understand exactly what pressure cooking is. When you think of pressure cooking, you probably envision that steel pot that had a funny looking lid with a weight that rattled and hissed as the food cooked. Whether you are using an old-fashioned pressure cooker on the stove or an electric pressure cooker, they both work in the same way to cook your food.

In pressure cooking, you always have a small amount of liquid (at least 1 cup) surrounding the food in the pot. You lock the lid on top of the pot so that you create an air-tight seal. You then turn the heat/power on. As the liquid in the pot heats to a boil, steam is created. Because you have the pot covered with a sealed lid, the steam cannot escape. Pressure then begins to build, and the temperature in the pot increases the temperature to above the boiling point of water to around 250°F. This increase in temperature, which can only be achieved under pressure, along with the fact that the food's surface is directly touching steam, results in food being cooked 3-10 times faster.



## Benefits to using an electric pressure cooker:

- **Saves Time** - While many electric pressure cookers lead you to believe that dinner will be on the table in an “instant”, that this is not exactly the case. Food will be cooked 3-10 times faster than normal stove top preparation, but the appliance does take time to come up to pressure and needs time to depressurize (or else could result in a severe steam burn). Depending on how much and what type of food is in the pressure cooker, it can take up to 15 minutes to reach the right pressure. It then generally takes 10-15 minutes to naturally depressurize but could take up to 30 if there is a large quantity of food in the pot.
- **Lower sodium** - High temperature steam increases the flavors of seasoning and spices; therefore, less salt is needed.
- **Increased nutrition** - Three factors lead to increased nutrition in a pressure cooker. Faster cooking time, lower amounts of cooking liquid, and less exposure to air all lead to an increase in vitamin and mineral retention.
- **Safe to use** - The internet is full of horror stories of pressure cookers blowing up and spewing food all over the kitchen, but those stories nearly all involve conventional stove top pressure cookers and are typically the result of poor maintenance. In contrast, electric pressure cookers are safe to use,

and if the manufacturer instructions and maintenance are followed, will not explode in your kitchen. To keep your electric pressure cooker functioning well, make sure to keep the pressure release valve and float free of food.

## Tips for using an electric pressure cooker:

- Electric pressure-cookers allow you to cook food similarly to stove-top cooking, as most brands have a sauté function that allows you to sear, sauté or simmer foods. Using this feature means you only have dirty one pot.
- While cooking, make sure the pressure release valve is in the ‘sealing’ position.
- Always allow the cooker to fully depressurize before removing the lid. Most models have a float valve that pops up when pressure is obtained. It then floats down when the pot is depressurized. You can ‘quick-release’ the pot by moving the pressure release valve to ‘venting’. Depending on how much food is in your pot, this ‘quick-release’ usually takes 5-10 minutes.
- **Do not overfill** the pot when pressure cooking. Max fill when using the pressure cooker function is  $\frac{2}{3}$  of the cooking pot and for certain foods that expand during cooking the max fill is  $\frac{1}{2}$  of the cooking pot. Foods that expand during cooking are rice, dried beans, grains, and soups with these ingredients.
- **These appliances are not safe for pressure canning!** Some models have a preset mode that says “canning”. Manufacturers have not provided research or information that electric pressure cookers maintain the correct temperature throughout the entire process. The temperature for canning low-acid foods must be at least 240°F. To ensure the proper temperature is reached throughout the canning process a thermal process canning test must be completed. During this testing, temperatures in the jars and the temperatures outside the jars in the canner must be measured throughout the process. No manufacturer has published or made available thermal process testing results and the National Center for Home Food Preservation has not completed any thermal process testing in electric pressure cookers. Furthermore, electric pressure cookers have a small capacity which means that jars will cool too quickly, and the adequate temperature will not be reached for a long enough duration.

Sources:

Geiger, Marlene. Electric Pressure Cookers. Iowa State University Extension. November 21, 2016.

<https://blogs.extension.iastate.edu/answer-line/2016/11/21/electric-pressure-cookers/>

Pressure Cooking. Utah State University Extension.

Petersilie, Erin et al. Meals Under Pressure: Meals in Minutes (powerpoint). Kansas State University Extension.

## Pressure cooker recipes

### Porcupine meatballs

Servings: 4

#### Ingredients:

- 1 lb. ground beef
- ¼ cup uncooked rice (not minute rice)
- 1 slightly beaten egg
- 2 Tablespoons finely chopped onion
- ½ teaspoon salt
- dash of pepper
- (2) 8 oz. cans tomato sauce 1/2 cup water
- 1 teaspoon soy sauce

#### Directions:

1. Combine ground beef, rice, egg, 1/2 cup tomato sauce, onion, salt and pepper.
2. Shape into about 15-20 balls.
3. Place meatballs in the instant pot.
4. Mix together the remaining tomato sauce, water and soy sauce. Pour tomato sauce mixture over meatballs.
5. Set pressure to high for 15 minutes.
6. When done, let rest for 5-10 minutes and then release the pressure. Serve and enjoy!



Source: [Utah State University Extension](https://www.ext.uzh.ch/utah-state-university-extension)

### Quick & easy pressure cooker tortilla soup

Servings: 4

#### Ingredients:

- 2 medium sized chicken breasts (frozen or raw)
- 1 carton roasted red pepper and tomato soup
- 1 can fire-roasted tomatoes
- 1 (4 oz. or 7 oz.) can mild green chilies
- 2 teaspoons chili powder
- 2 teaspoons cumin
- 1 teaspoon oregano
- 1 teaspoon kosher salt
- couple cracks black pepper
- 1 chicken bouillon cube
- 1-2 Tablespoons lime juice
- 1 cup frozen corn
- 1 can black beans (or any beans) drained and rinsed

#### Directions:

1. Place all ingredients EXCEPT corn and beans in pressure cooker.
2. Close pressure cooker and cook on high pressure for 15 minutes if using frozen chicken and for 8 minutes if thawed.
3. You can do a quick pressure release if you are in a hurry, or let it naturally release for about 10 and then release the rest. Open pressure cooker and remove chicken and place on cutting board.
4. Add corn and beans and stir to heat through.
5. Shred chicken and then add back into pot. Add lime juice. Add salt and pepper or other seasonings to taste.

#### Toppings (if desired)

1. Sour cream or plain Greek yogurt
2. Tortilla chips
3. Crumbled or shredded cheese
4. Avocado

Source: [Utah State University Extension](https://www.ext.uzh.ch/utah-state-university-extension)

### Parmesan garlic spaghetti squash

Servings: 4

#### Ingredients:

- 1 spaghetti squash
- 1 cup water
- 1 Tablespoon olive oil 3 cloves garlic
- ½ cup grated Parmesan cheese

#### Directions:

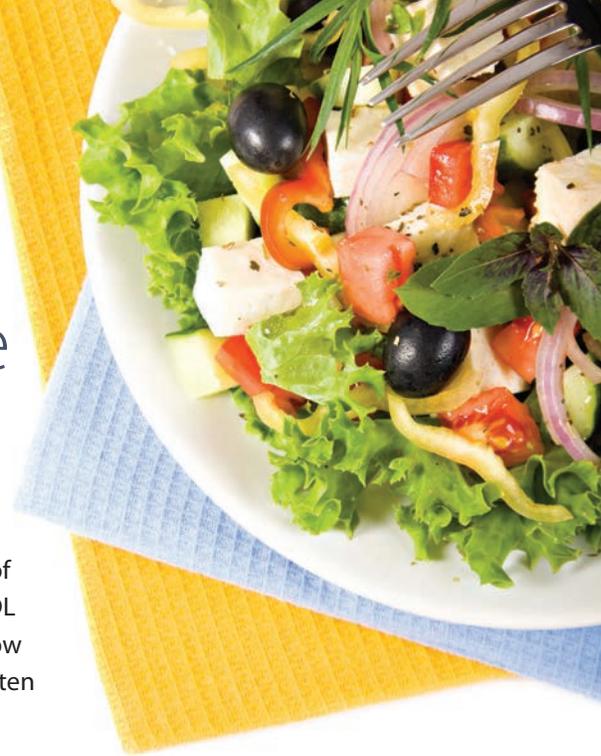
1. Place steaming rack and water into the pressure cooker.
2. Cut the spaghetti squash in half and scoop out the seeds.
3. Place the squash cut side down on the steaming rack.
4. Set Pressure Cooker to high pressure for 7 minutes.
5. When done, vent and do a quick release.
6. Remove the squash and use a fork to separate the squash from the shell. Remove the water from the pressure cooker and set the cooker to sauté. Add olive oil and garlic to pot and cook until fragrant.
7. Add the squash and parmesan cheese to the pot. Stir until heated through. Serve and enjoy.



Source: [Utah State University Extension](https://www.ext.uzh.ch/utah-state-university-extension)



# Add variety to make salads more healthy and enjoyable



What comes to mind when you hear the word “salad”? Probably something plain and boring that you have to force yourself to eat. But it’s time to move beyond plain iceberg lettuce and ranch dressing or salads overloaded with unhealthy toppings and transform them into colorful, flavorful meals that pack a nutritional punch.

Focus on meeting the 2020-2025 Dietary Guidelines recommendation for 4½ cups (9 servings) of fruits and vegetables each day with these tips for salads that will appeal to even the pickiest eater.



## Make it colorful.

Skip the iceberg and opt for spinach or another dark leafy green. Dark leafy greens supply a tremendous amount of nutrients, including vitamin A, vitamin C, vitamin K, iron, calcium and fiber. Add some carrots, red bell peppers, tomatoes, blanched asparagus, beets or any other colorful vegetable and you’ll get additional nutrients critical for maintaining eyesight, bone health and digestive health.



**Salad isn’t just for vegetables anymore.** Try adding apples, citrus segments, grapes, strawberries or blueberries to

your plate of colorful vegetables. Just like many vegetables, fruits contain antioxidants that can help protect against certain forms of cancer as well as reduce levels of LDL or bad cholesterol. Avoid or limit how much dried fruit you add — they often have added sugars that can up the salad’s calorie count.



## Go a little nutty.

Walnuts are a great addition to any salad. These heart-healthy nuts contain more of the omega-3 fatty acids that can improve cardiovascular health and cognitive function than any other nut. You might want to try adding almonds if you aren’t a walnut fan. But keep in mind that both walnuts and almonds are high in calories even though they’re healthy.

## Add some protein.

Protein takes longer to digest, so it keeps us full longer. We also need protein for healthy muscles. Eggs, lean meat, beans, nuts and cheese (in limited quantities) are easy ways to add protein.



**Find a healthier dressing that works for you.** You now have quite a variety of light dressings and vinaigrettes from which to choose. Vinegar-based dressings typically have less fat and

calories than creamy dressings. Oil and vinegar is another healthy choice — the healthy fat from the oil helps your body absorb some of the salad’s vitamins — but you should still limit the amount you use.

You can easily make your own salad dressing by using 2 parts olive oil to 1 part acid (balsamic vinegar, red wine vinegar, cider vinegar, lemon juice or a combination of these). Add seasonings like oregano, basil, pepper or garlic. Adding a small amount of Dijon mustard or plain Greek yogurt will thicken the dressing. Enjoy experimenting!

Whether you are preparing dinner for your family, entertaining a crowd or grabbing something on the run, salad can be a simple way to satisfy recommendations for fruit and vegetable intake without turning on the stove. Take care to be smart about what you add to your salad — too much cheese, bacon, croutons and dressing can ruin good nutritional intentions — and you’ll have a meal as healthy as it is delicious.

# Make healthy recipe changes

## Skinny cauliflower mac & cheese

**Servings:** 12

**Ingredients:**

- 3 cups whole-grain pasta of choice
- 2 cups chopped cauliflower
- 2 Tablespoons unsalted butter or margarine
- 2 Tablespoons all-purpose flour
- 1 cup fat-free half-and-half, or more, as needed
- 2 ounces low-fat cream cheese
- 2 teaspoons Dijon mustard
- ½ teaspoon garlic powder
- 1½ cups shredded sharp cheddar cheese
- Salt, black pepper and paprika, to taste

**Directions:**

1. Wash hands and surfaces.
2. Heat oven to 375 degrees F.
3. Cook pasta according to package instructions. Within last 3 minutes of cooking, add cauliflower; drain well.
4. Melt butter in a 9-inch ovenproof skillet over medium-high heat. Whisk in flour until lightly browned, about 1 minute. Gradually whisk in half-and-half and cook, whisking constantly, until smooth, about 1-2 minutes. Stir in cream cheese, Dijon and garlic powder until slightly thickened, about 2 minutes. Stir in 1 cup cheese until melted, about 1-2 minutes. If the mixture is too thick, add more half-and-half, as needed; season with salt and pepper, to taste.
5. Stir in pasta and cauliflower; gently toss to combine. Sprinkle with remaining ½ cup cheese and paprika, if desired. Place into oven and bake until bubbly, about 12-15 minutes.
6. Refrigerate leftovers immediately.

**Nutrition information per serving (½ cup)**

Calories: 154; Total fat: 8.5g; Saturated fat: 5.3g  
Cholesterol: 28mg; Protein: 7g; Carbohydrates: 12.9g  
Fiber: 1.5g; Sodium: 151mg

Source: Adapted from Chungah Rhee





## Unstuffed cabbage rolls

**Servings:** 4

### Ingredients:

- 1 pound ground beef, browned
- 2 cans (14 ounces) no-salt diced tomatoes
- ½ large cabbage
- 2 cloves garlic, crushed
- ½ onion, chopped
- ¼ teaspoon red pepper flakes
- ½ teaspoon paprika
- 1 teaspoon salt
- ½ teaspoon pepper

### To freeze:

1. Wash hands and surfaces.
2. Brown ground beef and drain fat; cool completely. Wash and chop cabbage into smaller bite-size pieces. Dice onion, and crush garlic if it isn't already done.
3. Place all ingredients inside a gallon freezer bag. Press flat, as this will make for quicker thawing and save freezer space.

### To thaw:

1. Place in fridge overnight.
2. Once thawed, place contents in a deep pot over medium heat and cover with a lid. Stir occasionally, until heated through.
3. Serve over rice, potatoes or pasta, if desired. You could also easily turn this meal into a soup — add 2 cups water and 2 cups of broth, and a bit more seasoning, to taste.

### Nutrition information per serving (1 cup)

Calories: 256; Total fat: 7.5g; Sodium: 213mg  
Carbohydrates: 9.9g; Fiber: 2.9g; Protein: 36.5g

Source: [Smart Money Mom.com](http://SmartMoneyMom.com)



## Grilled banana splits

**Servings:** 4

### Ingredients:

- 4 bananas
- 1 Tablespoon butter, melted
- 4 ounces dark chocolate chips
- 1 cup fat-free ice cream
- ¼ cup ice cream sprinkles
- 4 maraschino cherries

### Directions:

1. Wash hands and surfaces.
2. Cut a small piece off the curved side of 4 unpeeled bananas so that they sit level, then make a deep slit down the center of each through the peel; place on four separate sheets of heavy-duty nonstick aluminum foil. NOTE: If using heavy-duty aluminum foil that is not nonstick, apply spray oil before adding ingredients.
3. Open the slits and brush the inside of each banana with melted butter, then sprinkle with 1 ounce chocolate chips; fold up the foil.
4. Grill the packets over high heat until the chocolate melts, 6 to 8 minutes (don't worry if the peel turns brown).
5. Open the peels and top the bananas with ice cream, sprinkles, a cherry and whipped topping, if desired.

### Nutrition information per serving (1 banana)

Calories: 302; Total fat: 10.4g; Saturated fat: 6g  
Cholesterol: 14mg; Carbohydrates: 48g; Fiber: 4g;  
Protein: 4g; Sodium: 124mg

Source: Adapted from [www.verywell.com](http://www.verywell.com)



## Reduced-calorie “hot wing” dip

**Servings:** 12

### Ingredients:

- 1 pound boneless, skinless chicken breast or tenders (about 7 tenders)
- 1 Tablespoon dry ranch dressing or dip mix
- ½ teaspoon garlic powder
- 4 ounces Greek yogurt cream cheese
- ¾ cup plain Greek yogurt
- 3 ounces part-skim mozzarella cheese, grated (about 1 cup)
- ½ cup hot sauce

### Directions:

1. Wash hands and surfaces.
2. Mix dry ranch dressing powder with garlic powder to make a dry rub. Rub mixture evenly over each piece of chicken, and place in a single layer on the bottom of a slow cooker set on low.
3. When chicken breasts are fully cooked (3-4 hours) use a fork to shred chicken. Add the Greek yogurt cream cheese, Greek yogurt, grated mozzarella cheese and hot sauce to the chicken. Stir well and place lid on the slow cooker.
4. Dip is ready when the mixture is heated through and cheese is melted. Serve with vegetables, baked tortilla chips or crackers, and refrigerate leftovers immediately.

### Nutrition information per serving (¼ cup)

Calories: 86; Total fat: 3.4g; Saturated fat: 2g; Protein: 12g; Carbohydrates: 1.6g; Fiber: 0g  
Sodium: 510mg

Source: Tammy Roberts



## Edamame and pasta with feta

**Servings:** 4

### Ingredients:

- 4 ounces uncooked whole-grain penne or rotini pasta
- 8 ounces fresh or frozen shelled edamame
- 1½ cups sweet grape tomatoes, quartered
- 16 pitted olives, coarsely chopped
- 2 Tablespoons chopped fresh basil leaves, or 2 teaspoons dried basil leaves
- 1 medium garlic clove, minced
- ½ teaspoon dried rosemary leaves, crumbled (optional)
- ⅛ teaspoon dried red pepper flakes (optional)
- 1 medium lemon, halved (optional)
- 2 ounces crumbled reduced-fat feta

### Directions:

1. Wash hands and surfaces.
2. Cook the pasta according to the package directions, omitting any salt or fats and adding the edamame during the last 2 minutes of cooking time.
3. In a small bowl, combine the tomatoes, olives, basil, garlic, and the rosemary and red pepper flakes, if desired. Toss to blend and set aside.
4. Drain the pasta and edamame in a colander. Place in pasta bowl, squeeze lemon over all, if desired, top with feta and mound the tomato mixture in the center.
5. Enjoy! Refrigerate leftovers immediately.

### Nutrition information per serving (1 cup)

Calories: 235; Total fat: 7g; Saturated fat: 1.9g; Cholesterol: 5mg; Sodium: 340mg; Carbohydrates: 32g; Fiber: 7g; Protein: 13g

Source: Adapted from [Diabetes.org](https://www.diabetes.org)



## Chocolate protein power bars

Servings: 6

### Ingredients:

- 6 dried figs
- 2 Tablespoons coconut oil
- ¼ cup peanut butter
- ¼ cup almond meal
- ¼ cup dried cranberries
- ¼ cup coconut flakes
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1 cup pecans (or any nut of choice)
- 2 scoops chocolate protein powder
- ¼ cup water
- Pinch of cinnamon

### Directions:

1. Wash hands and surfaces.
2. In a food processor, combine figs, coconut oil and peanut butter. Process until blended. Add the cranberries, coconut, almond meal, cinnamon and salt, and process until the mixture is well incorporated.
3. Add the pecans, chocolate protein powder and water, and pulse until the mixture looks like cookie dough.
4. Transfer the dough into an 8" x 8" baking dish and press the mixture down flat with the back of a spoon. Store in the fridge for at least 1 hour to harden. Cut into bars. Refrigerate leftovers for up to 1 week.

### Nutrition information per serving (2-by-2-inch bar)

Calories: 268; Total fat: 21g; Fiber: 4g; Carbohydrates: 13g  
Protein: 10g

Source: [menshealth.com](http://menshealth.com)



## Orange ginger chicken packs

Servings: 4

### Ingredients:

- ½ cup orange juice
- 2 Tablespoons hoisin sauce
- 1 teaspoon minced garlic
- 1 Tablespoon minced ginger
- 4 boneless, skinless chicken breasts (4 ounces each)
- 2 navel oranges, sliced

### Directions:

1. Wash hands and surfaces.
2. Combine orange juice, hoisin sauce, garlic and ginger in a zip-close bag.\* Add chicken breasts and turn to coat. Marinate for 30-60 minutes in the refrigerator.
3. Trim ends from oranges and slice into 4 slices each.
4. Tear four sheets of both aluminum foil and parchment paper, and layer parchment on top of foil.
5. Place 2 orange slices on parchment and then place chicken breast on top of oranges. Wrap and seal each packet and place on preheated grill (or in an oven at 350 degrees F) and grill for 20-30 minutes, or until chicken reaches 165 degrees F when tested with cooking thermometer.

\*This marinade is also very good with salmon.

### Nutrition information per serving (1 chicken breast)

Calories: 204; Total fat: 7g; Saturated fat: 2g; Cholesterol: 75mg;  
Sodium: 205mg Carbohydrates: 8g; Fiber: .5g; Protein: 26g

Source: Adapted from [allrecipes.com](http://allrecipes.com)



a series of simple recipes  
using canned foods

## Canned Pineapple

### Chicken and vegetable stir-fry

Servings: 6

**Ingredients:**

- 2 teaspoons vegetable oil
- Bag (1 pound) frozen stir-fry vegetables
- 1 can (15 ounces) crushed pineapple, drained
- 1 (12.5 ounces) can chicken, drained
- 3 Tablespoons low-sodium soy sauce
- Salt and pepper, to taste

**Directions:**

1. Wash hands and surfaces.
2. Heat oil in skillet and add frozen vegetables. Cook for 3-4 minutes over medium-high heat, or until vegetables are crisp-tender.
3. Add remaining ingredients and cook for another two minutes, or until chicken is hot.
4. Serve immediately. This dish is great over brown rice.
5. Refrigerate leftovers immediately.



### Spicy pineapple-raisin salsa

Servings: 8

**Ingredients:**

- 1 can (20 ounces) crushed pineapple, drained
- 1 jar (16 ounces) medium or hot chunky salsa
- 1 teaspoon packed brown sugar
- ¼ cup seedless or golden raisins

**Directions:**

1. Wash hands and surfaces.
2. Combine the pineapple, salsa and brown sugar in microwave-safe bowl.
3. Cover and microwave on medium power (50 percent) for 5 minutes, or until hot.
4. Stir in the raisins, and chill in the refrigerator for at least 1 hour.
5. Serve with pita or tortilla chips, or over your favorite grilled entrée!
6. Refrigerate leftovers immediately.

Adapted from Canned Food Alliance, [mealttime.org](http://mealttime.org)



## Southern-style loose meat sandwich

Servings: 4

### Ingredients:

- 1 pound ground beef or ground venison
- 1 cup barbecue sauce
- 1 can (15 ounces) sliced peaches in juice, drained
- 2 teaspoons Worcestershire sauce
- ¼ teaspoon salt
- ¼ teaspoon pepper
- 4 hamburger buns

### Directions:

1. Wash hands and surfaces
2. Brown meat in a skillet over medium-high heat. Drain and discard fat, if any.
3. In a separate bowl, mash peaches with fork until pureed. Mix in barbecue sauce, Worcestershire sauce, salt and pepper.
4. Pour peach and BBQ mixture into skillet with browned meat. Cook until sauce is reduced to desired thickness.
5. Spoon meat mixture onto hamburger buns.
6. Enjoy! Refrigerate leftovers immediately.



## Georgia peach lettuce salad

Servings: 4

### Ingredients:

- 1 head of leaf lettuce (romaine, red leaf or spinach)
- 1 can (14.5 ounces) peaches in light syrup, drained (reserve syrup)
- 1 Tablespoon oil
- 1 Tablespoon of vinegar (cider, red wine or white)
- Salt and pepper

### Directions:

1. Wash hands and surfaces.
2. Wash lettuce leaves by submerging them in a large bowl or in a sink full of cool water.
3. Dry greens completely, making sure that excess water has been removed.
4. Tear lettuce into pieces.
5. In a bowl, mix the vinegar, oil and reserved peach syrup. Add salt and pepper to taste.
6. Mix the salad and dressing together and top with sliced peaches.
7. Enjoy! Refrigerate leftovers immediately.



\*Note: The peaches can be canned in water or light or heavy syrup. The reserved syrups will have a different taste when mixed with oil and vinegar (heavy syrup will be a little sweeter, light syrup will have a slight sweetness and water will have more of oil and vinegar taste).

### Additional Cooking tips:

- Dry greens completely. Excess water can dilute the flavor of your dressing and stops the dressing from clinging well to the lettuce.
- Avoid tearing greens in advance to maintain vitamin C levels and prevent early browning of leaves.

The dark green color in collard greens shows they are a good source of vitamin C.

# Collard greens

Servings: 4

## Ingredients:

- 1 pound collard greens (or ½ pound collards, ½ pound kale)
- 1 onion, chopped
- 2 to 4 cloves garlic, chopped
- 1½ cups water
- ½ cup cider vinegar
- 1 Tablespoon salt, to taste
- 1 Tablespoon red pepper flakes
- Hot sauce, to taste



## Directions:

1. Wash hands and surfaces.
2. Wash greens in a colander.
3. Chop into bite-size pieces.
4. Put all ingredients except hot sauce into a large pot and cover.
5. Bring to a boil, stirring occasionally; then reduce heat and simmer.
6. Greens are done when they have shrunk down and are cooked through, usually about a half hour, but it can simmer longer.
7. Serve with its liquid. Refrigerate leftovers.

## Nutrients per serving:

Calories: 61; Vitamin C: 44mg  
Fat: .5g; Carbohydrates: 11g  
Protein: 3g; Cholesterol: 0



## Quick pantry salsa

Servings: 4

## Ingredients:

- ½ cup frozen or canned corn
- ½ cup canned black beans, drained and rinsed
- ½ cup fresh tomatoes, diced
- ¼ cup onion, diced
- ¼ cup green pepper, diced
- 1 Tablespoon lime juice
- 2 cloves garlic, chopped fine, or
- ½ teaspoon dried minced garlic
- ¼ cup picante sauce
- Baked corn tortilla chips or sliced fresh vegetables for dipping

## Directions:

1. Wash hands and surfaces.
2. In a large bowl, combine all ingredients.
3. Drain before serving.
4. Serve with fresh vegetables or low-fat baked tortilla chips.
5. Refrigerate leftovers.

*Note: One can Mexican-style tomatoes can be substituted for fresh tomatoes, onions and green pepper.*

## Nutrition information per serving

Calories: 60; Fat: .5g; Protein: 2.3g; Cholesterol: 0mg;  
Sodium: 272mg Carbohydrates: 14g; Vitamin C: 10mg

# Understanding probiotics

When it comes to healthy eating, there is a constant barrage of information. Fueled by a multibillion-dollar industry, marketers try to convince us that their products are just what we need to buy and eat to feel good and be healthy. That's particularly true in the burgeoning probiotics market.

Here are some facts about probiotics to help you cut through the chatter and make an informed purchasing decision.

Probiotics are the “friendly” bacteria that reportedly help improve or maintain health. Generally speaking, non-harmful bacteria are formed during the fermentation process. Fermented foods include all yogurts, aged cheeses, cottage cheese, pickles (brine-cured without vinegar), sauerkraut, tempeh, tofu, kimchi, miso, microbrewed beers and wine.

But non-harmful bacteria are not necessarily helpful. And even when a food contains helpful bacteria, processing may destroy them so that they are no longer beneficial. According to Dr. Joel B. Mason, professor of nutrition and medicine at Tufts University and staff physician in the Tufts Medical Center gastroenterology and clinical nutrition divisions: “There are over 100 different types of organisms that might be called ‘probiotics,’ and each one is very different.”

However, research has shown that certain strains help in specific situations. For example, for older hospitalized patients undergoing broad-spectrum antibiotic therapy, the *Bifidobacterium* spp., *Saccharomyces* spp., *Lactobacilli* spp. and *Streptococcus* spp. reduced the likelihood of associated diarrhea. In general, certain probiotics help promote good digestion by fighting off bad bacteria in the gut, just as naturally occurring good bacteria do.

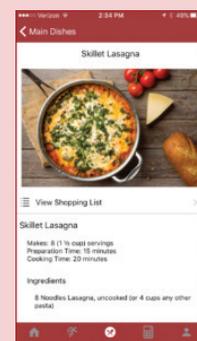


On the other hand, research does not yet substantially support some claims touted by marketers of probiotic foods and supplements, such as those asserting that probiotics improve the immune system, reduce symptoms of the flu or colds or prevent constipation.

For a healthy eating plan that encourages good digestion, continue to make whole grains, vegetables, fruits and lower-fat fermented dairy options — including yogurt, aged cheeses or cottage cheese — your everyday choices.

## Eating Smart • Being Active Mobile App

The *Eating Smart • Being Active* app is designed to allow participants to use some of the skills they learn in class between lessons and after they graduate from the lesson series. The mobile app includes the following features:



### Physical activity

- Instructions and GIFs or videos of all the physical activities in *Eating Smart • Being Active* are included, so that participants can learn and use these activities at home.
- A physical activity tracker helps participants track their progress toward their fitness goals.
- A step tracker in the app connects to participants' phone step trackers so they can see how many steps they take each day.

### Recipes

- All of the recipes from the *Eating Smart • Being Active Cookbook* are on the app — along with a photo of the prepared recipe — so that participants can make the recipes at home.

### Unit price calculator

- The app includes a unit price calculator so that participants can easily and quickly calculate unit prices at the grocery store to determine the best price between two similar products.

The app is available for free in the App Store (for iPhones) and Google Play (for Androids) — just type *Eating Smart Being Active* into the search function of the app store.

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## Check out [CookingMatters.org](https://CookingMatters.org)



The Cooking Matters website provides more than 90 chef-developed recipes with color photos and nutrition information. Users can pick up easy tips to save money in the grocery store and filter recipes by meal categories such as 30-minute meals, diabetes friendly, one-dish, seasonal, and kid-approved.

Cooking Matters is part of a national program operated by Share Our Strength, a nonprofit dedicated to fighting hunger. In Missouri, Cooking Matters is administered by Operation Food Search, a food bank in St. Louis. Operation Food Search has teamed up with MU Extension to offer Cooking Matters courses around the state to families with limited resources.

# COOKING MATTERS®



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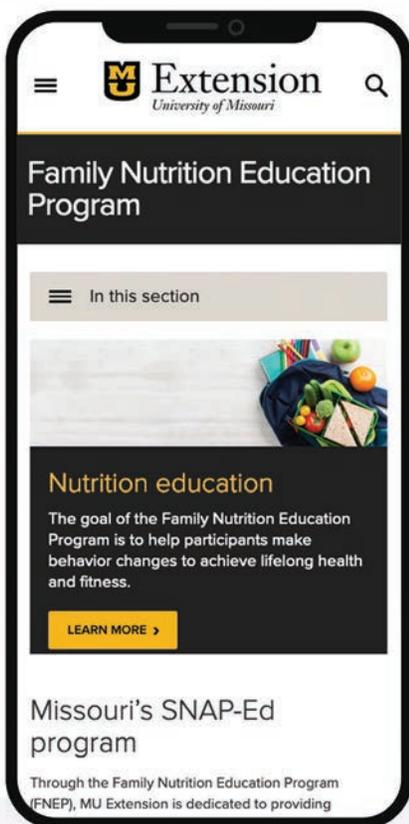
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