

From the desk of Ellen Zegarelli, Dietetic Intern

June is National Fruit & Vegetable Month!

Be sure to celebrate by eating your summer favorites, but remember these tips:

- Buying fruits and vegetables that are in season is a great way to save money. The summer is a great time to buy fresh favorites.
- A budget-friendly way to enjoy your favorite produce that is not in season is to buy it frozen or canned. While shopping for these items, look for those without added syrups, sugars, or sauces. You want the fruit to be as close to its whole, natural form as possible.
- Be sure to wash all fresh produce thoroughly.
 - Melons and other hard-skinned fruits and vegetables with a clean produce brush.
 - The items that you peel should still be washed to prevent the spread of germs from the outside of the item to the inside.
 - After you have cleaned your fruit or vegetables, place it in a clean container if it will be stored, rather than the one that it came in.
 - Be wary of items that are labeled “pre washed,” as they may not have been washed well, and could have been stored in dirty areas. It is always best to wash if you are in question.
- If you are cutting your fruit or vegetables, be sure to use a clean cutting board that is not used for raw meat or seafood. Try to designate a cutting board for just produce and bread to prevent the spread of germs that can contaminate your food.
- Always remove outer layers of produce items that you can, such as onions or heads of lettuce; these are likely to be the dirtiest.
- To get the most nutrients from your produce, it is usually best to leave them in their whole form. Cooking vegetables in water makes them more apt to lose nutrients in the water that they are cooked in. If you are going to cook your vegetables, steaming them is best, and often produces a more vibrant color.
- There is no limit to what you can add vegetables to—try adding chopped vegetables into pasta sauce, load up sandwiches or tacos, or even blend them with fruit and yogurt to make a smoothie.
- Try using thinly sliced zucchini in place of pasta, pureed cauliflower for pizza crust, or other similar ideas for lower carbohydrate meals.

IT'S FRUITS AND VEGETABLES IN JUNE

The focus of this month's newsletter is fruits and vegetables. Remember our moms telling us, “You have to eat your vegetables?” Well, it really works. A proper balance of fruits and vegetables along with our daily meals are important to maintain a healthy diet. Our clients tell us that 72% of those we serve are able to maintain or improve their health. A gift from your heart will help ease the financial burdens of some of the most fragile and vulnerable people in our communities and send the comforting message that people truly care. Your gift of \$6.00 pays for two meals for someone who cannot pay. Whatever you can give will help. It's simple. Just place your gift in the envelope you received.

Thank you!

Phil Marcin

Development Director

Questions? If you have any questions on this or any nutrition-related topic, or have an idea for a future *Healthy Bite* topic, please call our registered dietitian, Lori Harvey. You can reach her by telephone at 330-376-7717 extension 140 or by email lharvey@mobilemealsinc.org.

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