Food Bites

April 2016

Veggie of the Month: Asparagus

Asparagus has a long history going back as far as the first century. We have records of it growing in ancient Greece and Rome. Egyptians over 2,000 years ago cultivated asparagus for medicinal reasons and legend has it that it was so revered they offered it up to gods in their rituals.

As with all vegetables the first asparagus was discovered in the wild. A wild asparagus has thin shoots thinner than a pencil and is much different than the asparagus that you find In your grocery counter.

This giant veggie is one of the most nutritionally well-balanced vegetables -- high in folic acid and a good source of potassium, fiber, thiamin, and vitamins A, B6, and C. A 5-ounce serving provides 60% of the RDA for folic acid and is low in calories. You can enjoy this veggie raw or with minimal preparation, which the Romans seemed to appreciate. They had a saying, "As quick as cooking asparagus," for something done rapidly.

Fruit of the Month: Plums

Established in 1737, the Prince Nursery of Flushing, New York were the first to advertise plums for sale. Prince Nursery is the earliest reference to European plums in America to date. Their scientific name is Prunus domestica. Luther Burbank wrote of plums in his fourth book about small fruits out of a series of twelve. Burbank was behind the propagation of many plum cultivars and wanted to make the fruit more popular. Plum trees were very easy to grow in America because of the stone fruit that came before it. Farmers were familiar with how to grow stone fruit properly and soon plums became very popular in America and all around the world. P. Domestica is also suited for colder climates, making propagation of the tree easier in climates outside of California.

Plums are a moderate sources in B-complex groups of vitamins such as niacin, vitamin B-6, and pantothenic acid. These vitamins acts as cofactors help the body metabolize carbohydrates, protein and fats. They also provide about 5% RDA levels of vitamin K. Vitamin K is essential for many clotting factors function in the blood as well as in bone metabolism and help reduce Alzheimer's disease in the elderly.

Texas AgriLife Extension Service

Family and Consumer Science

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The Food Stamp Program helps low-income people buy nutritious foods. Food Stamps can help you and your family eat a healthier diet. Better Living for Texans is supported by USDA's Food Stamp Program. This institution is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

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USDA

10 tips
Nutrition Education Series

choosing healthy meals as you get older

10 healthy eating tips for people age 65+

Making healthy food choices is a smart thing to do—no matter how old you are! Your body changes through your 60s, 70s, 80s, and beyond. Food provides nutrients you need as you age. Use these tips to choose foods for better health at each stage of life.

1 drink plenty of liquids

With age, you may lose some of your sense of thirst. Drink water often. Low-fat or fat-free milk or 100% juice also helps you stay hydrated. Limit beverages that have lots of added sugars or salt. Learn which liquids are better choices.

2 make eating a social event

Meals are more enjoyable when you eat with others. Invite a friend to join you or take part in a potluck at least twice a week. A senior center or place of worship may offer meals that are shared with others. There are many ways to make mealtimes pleasing.

3 plan healthy meals

Find trusted nutrition information from ChooseMyPlate.gov and the National Institute on Aging. Get advice on what to eat, how much to eat, and which foods to choose, all based on the Dietary Guidelines for Americans. Find sensible, flexible ways to choose and prepare tasty meals so you can eat foods you need.

4 know how much to eat

Learn to recognize how much to eat so you can control portion size. MyPlate's SuperTracker shows amounts of food you need. When eating out, pack part of your meal to eat later. One restaurant dish might be enough for two meals or more.

5 vary your vegetables

Include a variety of different colored vegetables to brighten your plate. Most vegetables are a low-calorie source of nutrients. Vegetables are also a good source of fiber.

(over)

NIH National Institute on Aging

United States Department of Agriculture
Center for Nutrition Policy and Promotion
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6 eat for your teeth and gums

Many people find that their teeth and gums change as they age. People with dental problems sometimes find it hard to chew fruits, vegetables, or meats. Don't miss out on needed nutrients! Eating softer foods can help. Try cooked or canned foods like unsweetened fruit, low-sodium soups, or canned tuna.

7 use herbs and spices

Foods may seem to lose their flavor as you age. If favorite dishes taste different, it may not be the cook! Maybe your sense of smell, sense of taste, or both have changed. Medicines may also change how foods taste. Add flavor to your meals with herbs and spices.

8 keep food safe

Don't take a chance with your health. A food-related illness can be life threatening for an older person. Throw out food that might not be safe. Avoid certain foods that are always risky for an older person, such as unpasteurized dairy foods. Other foods can be harmful to you when they are raw or undercooked, such as eggs, sprouts, fish, shellfish, meat, or poultry.

9 read the Nutrition Facts label

Make the right choices when buying food. Pay attention to important nutrients to know as well as calories, fats, sodium, and the rest of the Nutrition Facts label. Ask your doctor if there are ingredients and nutrients you might need to limit or to increase.


Nutrition Facts

Amount Per Serving

Calories 230

% Daily Value*

Total Fat 8g 10%

Saturated Fat 1g 5%

Trans Fat 0g

Cholesterol 0mg 0%

Sodium 160mg 7%

Total Carbohydrate 37g 12%

Dietary Fiber 4g 16%

Sugars 1g

Protein 3g

Vitamin A 10%

Vitamin C 8%

Calcium 20%

Iron 45%

10 ask your doctor about vitamins or supplements

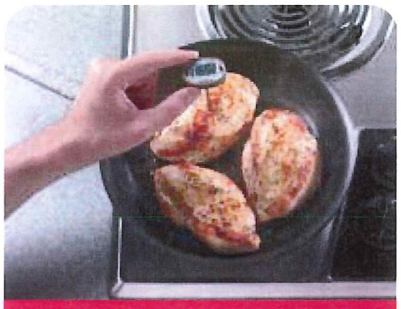
Food is the best way to get nutrients you need. Should you take vitamins or other pills or powders with herbs and minerals? These are called dietary supplements. Your doctor will know if you need them. More may not be better. Some can interfere with your medicines or affect your medical conditions.

Go to www.ChooseMyPlate.gov and www.nia.nih.gov/health/topics/nutrition for more information.

COOK

Partnership for Food Safety Education

Color is Not a Reliable Indicator of Safety



Check with a Food Thermometer

Microwave to Safe Temperatures

Cook to Safe Temperatures

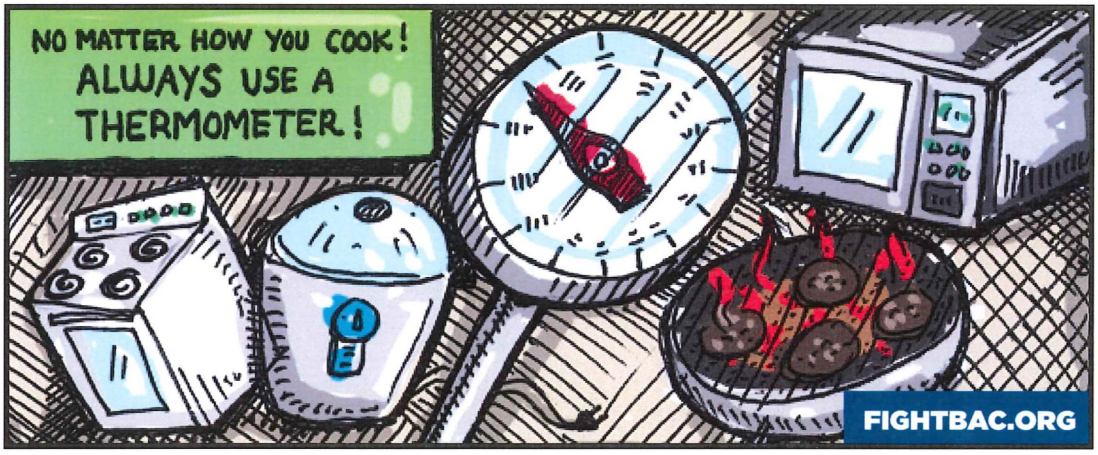
Safely cooking food is a matter of temperature. Foods need to reach a high enough internal temperature to kill bacteria that can cause foodborne illness.

Color is Not a Reliable Indicator of Safety

- Color and texture are not reliable indicators of whether food has reached a high enough internal temperature to destroy pathogens.
- According to USDA research, **1 in 4 hamburgers turns brown before reaching a safe internal temperature.**
- The best way to ensure safety is to use a food thermometer.

Check with a Food Thermometer

- **Use a food thermometer** to ensure that meat, poultry, seafood, egg products, leftovers and casseroles are cooked to safe temperatures to destroy any harmful bacteria.
- Compare your thermometer reading to the chart to make sure food has been cooked to a safe temperature.
- Food thermometers should be placed in the **thickest part of food**, making sure not to touch bone, fat or gristle.
- **Clean your food thermometer** with hot water and soap after each use.
- For information about calibrating your food thermometers, check out the **Thermometers and Food Safety Web page** from the USDA Food Safety and Inspection Service.



Partnership for Food Safety Education, 2016
We develop and promote effective education programs to reduce foodborne illness risk for consumers.

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Sweet Tater Tot Chili Casserole

Ingredients:

- 1 (15-ounce) can black beans, drained and rinsed
- 1 (15-ounce) can pinto beans, drained and rinsed
- 1 15-ounce) can or 1 ½ cups frozen corn, drained and rinsed
- 5 ounces (about ½ bag) fresh spinach
- 1 (16-ounce) jar salsa
- 1 cup shredded cheese, optional
- 1 (16-ounce) bag sweet potato tater tots, puffs, or crowns
- 1 avocado
- 1 lemon
- 1 lime

Directions:

1. Wilt spinach in nonstick pan, about 1 minute. Combine spinach, corn, beans, and salsa in a bowl. Pour into bakeware. Top with optional cheese and potatoes. Bake at 425 for 30 minutes, or until tater tots start to brown.

2. Before serving, dice an avocado and sprinkle it with fresh lemon or lime juice. The avocado could also be mashed and divided among the plates.

Pork & Potato Supper

Ingredients:

- 2 Tbsp. butter, divided
- 1 pork tenderloin, cut into 1.4 inch slices
- 1 cup sliced fresh mushrooms
- 2 garlic cloves, minced
- 8 small red potatoes, quartered
- 1 can chicken broth, divided
- 2 tsp. Worcestershire sauce
- 1/4 tsp. salt
- 1/4 tsp. pepper
- 2 Tbsp. all-purpose flour
- 4 green onions, sliced

Directions:

1. In a 12-in. skillet, heat 1 tablespoon butter over medium heat. Cook pork 2-4 minutes on each side or until tender. Remove from pan.
2. In same pan, heat remaining butter over medium-high heat. Add mushrooms; cook and stir until almost tender. Add garlic; cook 1 minute longer. Stir in potatoes, 1-1/2 cups broth, Worcestershire sauce, salt and pepper. Bring to a boil. Reduce heat; simmer, covered, 10-15 minutes or until potatoes are tender.
3. In a small bowl, mix flour and remaining broth until smooth. Stir into mushroom mixture. Bring to a boil; cook and stir until sauce is thickened. Stir in green onions. Return pork to pan and heat

One Skillet Lasagna

Ingredients:

- 3/4 lb. ground beef
- 2 garlic cloves, minced
- 1 can diced tomatoes with basil, oregano and garlic, undrained
- 2 jars spaghetti sauce
- 2/3 cut condensed cream of onion soup, undiluted
- 2 eggs, lightly beaten
- 1 1/4 cups cottage cheese
- 3/4 tsp. Italian seasoning
- 9 no-cook lasagna noodles
- 1/2 cup shredded Colby-Monterey Jack cheese
- 1/2 cup shredded mozzarella cheese

Directions:

1. In a large skillet, cook beef and garlic over medium heat until meat is no longer pink; drain. Stir in tomatoes and spaghetti sauce; heat through. Transfer to a large bowl.
2. In a small bowl, combine the soup, eggs, cottage cheese and Italian seasoning.
3. Return 1 cup meat sauce to the skillet; spread evenly. Layer with 1 cup cottage cheese mixture, 1-1/2 cups meat sauce and half of the noodles, breaking to fit. Repeat layers of cottage cheese mixture, meat sauce and noodles. Top with remaining meat sauce. Bring to a boil. Reduce heat; cover and simmer for 15-17 minutes or until noodles are tender.
4. Remove from the heat. Sprinkle with shredded cheeses; cover and let stand for 2 minutes or until melted.

Beef & Pepper Skillet

Ingredients:

- 1 lb. ground beef
- 1 can diced tomatoes with mild green chilies, undrained
- 1 can beef broth
- 1 Tbsp. chili powder
- 1/4 tsp. salt
- 1 8 tsp. garlic powder
- 2 cups instant brown rice
- 1 medium green pepper, sliced
- 1 medium sweet red pepper, sliced
- 1 cup shredded Colby-Monterey Jack cheese

Directions:

1. In a large skillet, cook beef over medium heat 6-8 minutes or until no longer pink, breaking into crumbles; drain.
2. Add tomatoes, broth, chili powder, salt and garlic powder; bring to a boil. Stir in rice and peppers. Reduce heat; simmer, covered, 8-10 minutes or until liquid is absorbed. Remove from heat; sprinkle with cheese. Let stand, covered, until cheese is melted.
3. **Freeze option:** Before adding cheese, cool beef mixture. Freeze beef mixture and cheese separately in freezer containers. To use, partially thaw in refrigerator overnight. Heat through in a saucepan, stirring occasionally and adding a little broth if necessary. Sprinkle with cheese.

Loaded Veggie & Black Bean Quesadillas

Ingredients:

- 1 can black beans
- 1 tomato
- 1/2 cup of corn
- 2 cloves of garlic
- 2-3 green onions
- Cooked brown rice
- Shredded cheese
- Cumin to taste
- 4 large tortillas

Directions:

1. Rinse and drain black beans. Chop tomatoes and green onion. Mince garlic.
2. Place a tortilla on a skillet.
3. Add a layer of cheese, followed by the beans, veggies, and rice.
4. Add another layer of cheese to "glue" both sides together.
5. Sprinkle on a bit of cumin and then place the other tortilla on top.
6. Heat over medium for a few minutes on each side or until heated through.

No-Mayo Coleslaw

Ingredients:

- 1/4 small red cabbage
- 1/2 small green cabbage
- 1/2 carrot, shredded
- Zest of 1/2 lemon
- 1/4 cup lemon juice
- 1/4 cup olive oil
- 1 Tbsp. honey
- 1 tsp. salt
- 1/4 tsp. black pepper

Directions:

1. Remove any tough outer leaves from the cabbage.
2. Trim the core and any tough stems from the cabbage and thinly slice.
3. Add to a bowl with the shredded carrot, lemon zest, lemon juice, olive oil, honey, salt and black pepper. Toss to combine.
4. Serve this right away for more of a salad, or store it in the fridge overnight for a slaw that's more pickled.

Balsamic Cucumber Salad

Ingredients:

- 1 large English cucumber, halved and sliced
- 2 cups grape tomatoes, halved
- 1 medium red onion, halved and thinly sliced
- 1/2 cup balsamic vinaigrette
- 3/4 cup rumbled reduced-fat feta cheese

Directions:

1. In a large bowl, combine cucumber, tomatoes and onions.
2. Add vinaigrette; toss to coat.
3. Refrigerate, covered, until serving.
4. Just before serving, stir in cheese.

Colorful Spiral Pasta Salad

Ingredients:

- 1 package tricolor spiral pasta
- 4 cups fresh broccoli florets
- 1 pint grape tomatoes
- 1 can pitted ripe olives, drained
- 1/8 tsp. salt
- 1/8 tsp. pepper
- 1 1/2 cups Italian salad dressing with roasted red pepper and Parmesan

Directions:

1. In a Dutch oven, cook pasta according to package directions, adding the broccoli during the last 2 minutes of cooking. Drain and rinse in cold water.
2. Transfer to a large bowl. Add the tomatoes, olives, salt and pepper. Drizzle with salad dressing; toss to coat. Chill until serving.

Sour Cream Cucumbers

Ingredients:

- 1/2 cup sour cream
- 3 Tbsp. white vinegar
- 1 Tbsp. sugar
- Pepper to taste
- 4 medium cucumbers, peeled if desired and thinly sliced
- 1 small sweet onion, thinly sliced and separated into rings.

Directions:

1. In a large bowl, whisk sour cream, vinegar, sugar and pepper until blended. Add cucumbers and onion; toss to coat.
2. Refrigerate, covered, at least 4 hours. Serve with a slotted spoon.

Mexican Rice with Chicken

Ingredients:

- 1 package Mexican-style rice and pasta mix.
- 2 Tbsp. butter
- 1 3/4 cups water
- 1 can diced tomatoes with onions, undrained
- 2 cups cubed cooked chicken
- 1 jalapeno pepper, seeded and chopped

Directions:

1. In a large skillet, cook and stir rice and pasta mix in butter until lightly browned, about 5 minutes. Add the water, tomatoes and contents of rice seasoning packet. Bring to a boil. Reduce heat; cover and cook for 10 minutes.
2. Add chicken and jalapeno. Cover and cook for 8-10 minutes or until rice is tender and liquid is absorbed.

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