



Food Bites



July 2016



Fruit of the Month: Blueberries

The Blueberry is one of a few native fruits of North America and was revered by the Northeast Native Americans. During the seventeenth century, settlers from England arrived in the new world to begin colonies. The colonists learnt; from the Native Americans, how to gather blueberries, dry them under the summer's sun and store them for the winter. In time, blueberries became an important food source and were preserved, and later canned. A beverage made with blueberries was an important staple for civil war soldiers. In the 1880s, a blueberry canning industry began in the Northeast USA.

Research shows blueberries can reduce the risk of heart attacks and stroke. Blueberries are one of the richest sources of antioxidants and contain the health-promoting phytochemical, anthocyanin. Blueberries are a good source of vitamin C, which is important for strengthening the immune system. Blueberries also contain the unique, phenol-like antioxidants pterostilbene and resveratrol. Blueberries are a very good source of vitamin K, vitamin C, and manganese. Blueberries are also a good source of fiber and copper. For an in-depth nutritional profile click here: [Blueberries](#).



Veggie of the Month: Cucumbers

The cucumber (*Cucumis sativus*) is a member of the Cucurbita, or gourd, family. They are believed to be native to India and have been cultivated in western Asia for about 4,000 years. The cucumber spread to the Mediterranean and was especially beloved by the Romans who eventually introduced the vegetable/fruit to Europe. Cucumbers were spread to the New World by the Spanish. The native-Americans began cultivating them along with other gourds like pumpkins and squash.

Cucumbers are an excellent source of vitamin K and molybdenum. They are also a very good source of the pantothenic acid. They are also a good source of copper, potassium, manganese, vitamin C, phosphorus, magnesium, biotin, and vitamin B1. They also contain the important nail health-promoting mineral silica.

Their high water content helps ward off dehydration and combat the heat while their refreshing and mild taste appeals to even the pickiest eaters.



TEXAS A&M
AGRI LIFE
EXTENSION

Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service
Family and Consumer Science
P.O. Box 279, Panhandle, TX 79068
Phone: 806-537-3882
carson@ag.tamu.edu

Jeanene Montgomery

Jeanene Montgomery
Texas AgriLife Extension
Family & Consumer Science

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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Take Control with Meal Planning

Meal planning is a small activity that gives you big results. Take a few minutes each week to plan the meals and dishes you will make. This way you eat healthier, stress less, and spend more time preparing food instead of thinking about what to prepare.

How to plan meals

1. **Look at what you have.** If you have lettuce in your refrigerator and it may go bad soon, include it in a salad or tacos earlier in the week.
2. **Know your schedule.** If you know that you have a long day on Wednesday, plan ahead to use a slow cooker to prepare dinner that day. This saves you from buying fast food.
3. **Plan to make larger batches.** You can double or triple recipes and freeze them in individual containers. Use them throughout the week to create different meals.
4. **Leftovers are great staples.** Tonight's roast chicken can be used tomorrow in a stir-fry, garden salad, or chicken chili. This way you don't have to throw out leftovers.
5. **Let MyPlate help you.** When planning your meals, use MyPlate as a guide to make sure that you are including all the right food groups.
6. **Include your family.** Ask family members to help you plan your meals and use as many suggestions as possible.



Get Ready, Get Set, Go Shopping!

Eating healthy does not have to be expensive. With a little planning, you can buy a variety of foods to use in meals that will help keep you healthy and energized.

Get Ready

- Plan meals and snacks for the week. Make a list of meals you plan to eat during the week — don't forget snacks for you and the kids!
- Look at what you have. Check what foods you have on hand and what foods you will need to buy.
- Check what foods are on sale. If a certain fruit or vegetable is on sale, you can adapt a meal or snack to use it.
- Make a shopping list. Once you have figured out what foods you will be buying, write them all down on your shopping list.

Get Set

- Don't go hungry. If you go grocery shopping on an empty stomach, you may find yourself wanting to buy snacks or foods that aren't on your list.
- Bring coupons. Many stores have coupons that will help you save money when buying fruits and vegetables, whether they are fresh, frozen, canned, or dried.

Go Shopping!

- Compare store brands to national ones. The taste and quality is often the same but you usually pay less for the store brands.
- Stay around the perimeter of the store. Many healthful foods such as fruits, vegetables, meats, and dairy products are found on the aisles closest to the walls.
- Resist impulse buys. Stick to your shopping list to avoid unplanned purchases. Free samples, snacks, in-store bakeries, and non-food seasonal displays can lead to impulse buys.



Healthy Makeovers with Fruits and Vegetables

Slash the Salt.

Instead of salt, season your fruits and vegetables with the following herbs and spices.

Fruit: allspice, anise seeds, cardamom, cilantro, cinnamon, chili powder, cloves, fennel seeds, ginger, mint, or nutmeg.

Vegetables: basil, curry, chili powder, cumin, dry mustard, garlic powder, ginger powder, onion powder, oregano, paprika, parsley, or tarragon.

Cut the Sugar.

Try substituting cakes and cookies with quick breads and muffins made with vegetables and fruit. Banana bread or pumpkin muffins are sure to please.

Basic muffin recipe

(based on food.com/recipe/basic-muffins-75851)

1. In a large bowl, place 2 cups sifted all-purpose flour, 3 teaspoons baking powder, 1/2 teaspoon salt and 2 tablespoons sugar.
2. In a small bowl, beat 1 egg. Add 1 cup milk, 1 teaspoon vanilla and 4 tablespoons melted margarine and mix well. (Optional: Add up to 1 cup mashed fruit or grated vegetables.)
3. Pour the egg mixture into the large bowl and stir until flour mixture is moistened.
4. Grease a standard-size muffin tin; fill the cups 1/2 to 2/3 full. Bake for 20 to 25 minutes at 400°F, until muffins are golden-brown and spring back when touched.



Reduce the Fat.

Top your salad with low-fat store-bought salad dressing, or make homemade dressings using light mayonnaise.

Healthier ranch dressing recipe

(based on recipe.com/healthified-ranch-dressing)

1. In small bowl, mix until well blended:
 - 1/2 cup fat free plain yogurt
 - 1/4 cup light mayonnaise
 - 3/4 cup buttermilk
 - 1 tablespoon chopped chives
 - 2 teaspoons fresh parsley
 - 1/8 teaspoon salt
 - 1/8 teaspoon garlic powder
 - 1/8 teaspoon pepper
2. Cover; refrigerate for one hour.
3. Store in refrigerator and use within two days.

Strawberry Surprise Smoothie

Ingredients

- 1 cup vanilla yogurt
- 1 cup orange juice concentrate
- 1 cup frozen strawberries
- 1 cup pineapple chunks
- 1 banana, peeled, cut into chunks, and frozen

Directions

1. Add yogurt, juice concentrate, and fruit to blender.
2. Blend ingredients in blender until smooth.
3. Serve immediately.



Chicken & Broccoli Casserole Supreme

Ingredients

- non-stick cooking spray
- 1 onion, chopped
- 2 cups cooked chicken, diced
- 1 1/2 cups rice, cooked
- 1 can of cream of mushroom soup
- 1 package of frozen broccoli
- 1 cup cheese, shredded
- Salt & pepper to taste

Directions

1. Thoroughly coat a skillet with non-stick spray and cook onion on medium heat for 2 to 3 minutes.
2. Add chicken, rice, soup, and broccoli to skillet.
3. Mix thoroughly and heat on high for 5 minutes. Season to taste with salt and pepper.
4. Sprinkle cheese on top and serve immediately.



Hot & Spicy Corn Dip

Ingredients

- 1 small tomato
- 1/2 Tbsp. pickled jalapeno peppers, chopped and seeds removed
- 1 cup frozen corn, thawed
- 1/2 package cream cheese
- 1/4 cup cheese, shredded
- 1/8 tsp. garlic powder
- Assorted vegetables, tortilla chips, or grilled chicken for serving

Directions

1. Wash tomato under cool running water with a vegetable brush or hand.
2. Chop tomato and remove seeds.
3. Combine all ingredients in blender and blend well.
4. Serve with vegetables or tortilla chips, or on top of grilled chicken breast.



Ingredients

- 4 cups fresh spinach
- 4 cups romaine lettuce
- 2 cup green, red, yellow, or orange pepper, chopped
- 2 cups cherry tomatoes
- 1 cup broccoli, chopped
- 1 cup cauliflower, chopped
- 1 cup yellow squash, sliced
- 2 cups cucumber, sliced
- 2 cups carrot, chopped
- 1 cup zucchini, sliced
- Nonfat or low-fat salad dressing

5-A-Day Salad



Directions

1. Wash all of the vegetables and mix them together in a mixing bowl.
2. Top this colorful meal with the salad dressing of your choice.



Ingredients

- 1/2 pound ground beef
- 1/2 cup onion, chopped
- 1 can tomatoes
- 3/4 cup tomato paste
- 1 Tbsp. fresh parsley
- 1 1/2 cups water
- 1 tsp. garlic powder
- 2 cups eggs noodles
- 3/4 cup cottage cheese
- 1/4 cup Parmesan cheese

Quick Skillet Lasagna



Directions

1. Cook beef and onion in the frying pan until beef is brown and onion is tender. Drain off excess fat.
2. Add tomatoes, tomato paste, parsley, water, and garlic powder to the beef mixture. Bring to a boil and simmer until sauce is thick, about 25 minutes.
3. Cook noodles in a pot according to package directions.
4. Drain the noodles.
5. Add cooked, drained noodles to the beef mixture. Stir to prevent sticking.
6. Mix cheeses and drop spoonful into the frying pan.
7. Cover and heat over low heat for about 5 minutes. Refrigerate leftovers.

Ingredients

- 1 English muffin
- 2 Tbsp. whipped strawberry cream cheese
- 2 strawberries, sliced
- 2 grapes, sliced
- 2 slices of mandarin oranges

Directions

1. Toast the English muffin until golden brown in a toaster or on a skillet. Spread cream cheese on toasted muffin.
2. Arrange sliced strawberries, grapes, and mandarin on top of the cream cheese.



Sweet Potato Muffins

Ingredients

- 4 Tbsp. margarine
- 1/2 cup sugar
- 1 egg
- 2/3 cup cooked, mashed sweet potatoes
- 3/4 cup flour
- 2 tsp. baking powder
- 1/2 tsp. salt
- 1/2 tsp. cinnamon
- 1/4 tsp. nutmeg
- 1/2 cup milk
- 1/4 cup chopped pecans
- 1/4 cup chopped raisins

Directions

1. In medium mixing bowl, cream margarine and sugar.
2. Add eggs and sweet potatoes; mix well.
3. In a large bowl, stir flour with baking powder, salt, and spices.
4. Alternate adding milk and the potato mixture to the large bowl with your dry ingredients.
5. Fold in nuts and raisins.
6. Spoon into greased muffin tin, filling 12 cups 2/3 full.
7. Bake at 400 degrees for 25 minutes, or until golden brown.
8. Let cool about 5 minutes before serving.





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