

Who's Cooking Today? with Mary Beth Salisbury & Marie LoPresti

Take Advantage of our Bounty of Fruits and Vegetables

With so many fruits and vegetables available in our markets, it's a treat to go grocery shopping. Scientists confirm what we have known for years: fruits and vegetables help our bodies to stay healthy. They provide a wide array of vitamins, minerals, fiber, and cancer fighting substances. So, wash them well and start to eat them daily.

When asked why some folks do not eat their 5 to 9 servings a day of fruits and vegetables, the answer may be "they are expensive". Let us examine this statement. In local markets we have products that are grown locally and from very far away. Some products are in season while others are in season in another part of the world and must be shipped in which may add to the final cost. Remember that most fruits and vegetables are found in any number of forms throughout the grocery store. If fresh fruits and vegetables spoil before you and your family have time to consume them, consider buying frozen, canned or dried. It is wise to do a cost comparison and to consider the preferences of your family, before making your final selections. Remember to check for the addition of salt or sugar in frozen, canned or dried fruits and vegetables. To save additional dollars, buy fresh fruits and vegetables that are in season locally. During September look for avocados, carambola, eggplant, grapefruit, mangoes, squash, sweet corn, tangerines and tomatoes to be in season. In October we can look forward to cucumbers, green peppers, oranges, radishes, and strawberries to come into season. A complete listing of Florida produce availability can be found at www.florida-agriculture.com.

What comes then, as a result of the analysis, is what we have heard before: compare prices, buy in season, make use of vegetables and fruits from fresh, frozen, dried, canned and juiced.

Examine your shopping habits. What items do you buy that are OK for occasional use and substitute for the fruits and vegetables which are every day foods. Their nutritional value makes them wear that label.

If you are asking which foods or drinks are for occasional use only, the label can guide you. To give you a start consider sodas, maltas (a dark colored drink found in the Spanish markets), aides, fruit drinks made with a small percentage of juice and others. They are mostly drinks heavy in added sugars with different names like "high fructose corn syrup", sucrose and others.

Here are some ideas to get you started with your plan to eat your 5 to 9 servings everyday. (2 cups of fruit and 2 1/2 cups of vegetables for a 2,000 calories meal plan)

- ▣ Begin listing fruits and vegetables you like. Add a new one to your list every so often.
- ▣ Select colorful produce
- ▣ Add fruit to your cereal
- ▣ Drink vegetables juice for breakfast
- ▣ Grab a fruit as snack
- ▣ Make a fruit medley and use as desert and or snack.
- ▣ Dress your chicken with mango sauce
- ▣ Make a pineapple sherbet.
- ▣ Prepare a veggie stir-fry
- ▣ Dress your multi vegetable salad with a light dressing.
- ▣ Toss baby spinach with dry cherries or cranberries, add raspberry vinaigrette dressing.

The following are recipes for your enjoyment:

My favorite Stir Fry

Olive oil

Minced garlic

Cup of fresh or frozen vegetables

Sprinkle with basil, oregano, pepper flakes, ground cinnamon.

Heat oil, add minced garlic. Add cup up vegetables. Cook lightly. Add spices and herbs.

My pick: carrots, broccoli, mushrooms and onions. Get creative and use others like cauliflower, eggplant, brussel sprouts, etc. Again, use seasonal produce to cut the cost.

Enjoy.

Pineapple-lime Sherbet- 8 servings

4 cups cup up pineapple

1/3 cup thawed limeade concentrate

1 teaspoon grated lime peel

1 tablespoon lime juice

On a large baking pan, arrange cup up pineapple. Freeze until firm. (Takes at least 1 hour)

Combine the frozen pineapple, limeade, lime juice and peel in a food processor. Process until smooth. If pineapple is too hard let it stand at room temperature for 30 minutes before processing. Garnish with lime peel and serve immediately.

For more information on the web: www.5aday.gov, [www.healthierus.gov/dietary guidelines](http://www.healthierus.gov/dietaryguidelines), www.mypyramid.gov, www.fda.gov. This last one is for food, water safety issues.

Marie LoPresti is a Community Nutritionist with the Osceola County Health Department. To receive Closing the Gap's calendar of events featuring Diabetes, cholesterol, hypertension, weight management, cooking for health, supermarket tours, and exercise opportunities, call 407-343-2082 or 407-343-2076. Classes are free and are offered in Spanish, also.

Mary Beth Salisbury is the County Extension Director under the University of Florida/IFAS. Call 321-697-3000 to receive the Nutrition and consumer, free classes calendar and to subscribe to their newsletter.