



K-State Research and Extension Family Nutrition Program

DINING ON A DIME

Eating Better for Less

October / November

Spoiled rotten? It doesn't have to happen (to your produce)

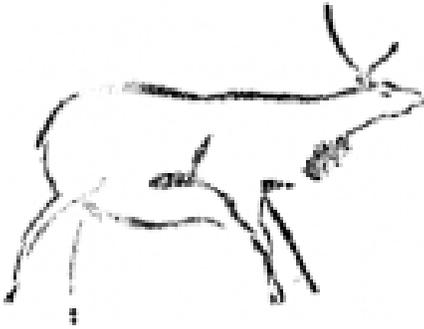
Dining on a Dime always encourages you and your family to eat plenty of fruits and vegetables each day. If you find that the fresh produce you buy spoils quickly, you know that food waste can also spoil your budget! Read on for tips to prevent waste and save money by prolonging the life of your fresh fruits and vegetables.



- The first step comes when you buy fresh fruits and vegetables. Select ones that are slightly firm and free of bruises and decay. Buy just the amount that you can eat in the next few days. (Note: The grocery bag pictured at right likely has too much fresh produce for an average-sized family to eat in just a few days!) Get enough canned, frozen and dried fruits and vegetables to serve until you can shop again for fresh produce.
- Allow foods that you wash first to dry well before storing them. Excess moisture leads to stored foods that mold or rot quickly. Mold can grow and spread rapidly. If you spot any spoiled foods, discard the bad ones immediately. The old saying “One bad apple can spoil the whole bunch” applies to all stored foods.
- Cut up just the amounts you will eat in the next two days. Whole uncut produce stays fresh longer. When any part of a plant food is cut or bruised, cells are broken and spoilage germs start growing. Store all cut produce in the refrigerator.
- Don't store all of your fresh fruits and veggies the same way.
 - ⇒ Allow some fruits to ripen at room temperature, then refrigerate them.
 - ⇒ Store bananas, oranges, melons, tomatoes, white potatoes, sweet potatoes, onions, garlic and all kinds of winter squash at room temperature, not in the refrigerator.
 - ⇒ Some fruits and veggies (including apples, bananas and pears) produce ethylene, a gas that speeds up the ripening process. Avoid storing those types of foods with ones that are sensitive to the gas (including leafy greens, celery and carrots). To see a long list of foods that produce or are sensitive to ethylene, visit www.fruitsandveggiesmorematters.org/archives/24546
 - ⇒ Store berries, mushrooms and fresh herbs unwashed in moisture-proof containers between paper towels to absorb extra water. Wash them just before serving.
- To read more about selecting and storing specific fresh fruits and vegetables, visit www.fruitsandveggiesmorematters.org/fruit-and-vegetable-storage-101

Should You Eat Like a Caveman in the 21st Century?

In the last few years, “Paleo” or “Caveman” diets have received media attention. Advocates of this lifestyle propose that we should eat like people did during the Paleolithic era, otherwise known as the Stone Age. They recommend eating fish, meats, eggs, vegetables, fruits, nuts and mushrooms; and avoiding grains, dairy foods, cooked dry beans, oils, salt and refined sugars. They believe that since it has “only” been within the last 10,000 years that agriculture came into being, we humans have not yet evolved in our metabolism to handle digesting well the kinds of foods grown on farms.



Is there any health truth behind the hype?

Our very early ancestors were hunters and gatherers. Supporters of the Paleo diet contend that our caveman predecessors were strong-boned, hearty and healthy. And if they died young, it was not because of disease, but because of accidents and a difficult environment.

Paleo diet promoters say that modern-day health problems (such as arthritis, osteoporosis, cancer, heart disease and other chronic diseases) did not exist during the Stone Age. But no one alive now can be sure of what diseases occurred then. And if those diseases were not present, is it because of the differences in diets or because of other differences?

A one-size-fits-all approach to diet does not work well. For individuals who are diagnosed as having food sensitivities and intolerances, yes, their health will improve if they avoid those foods that they cannot tolerate.

Overall, though, people living in the U.S. now live longer and enjoy fewer years of disability than ever before. And nutrition experts agree that the rise in obesity and obesity-related diseases over the past 30 years is not because Americans are eating too many whole grains, low-fat dairy products or cooked dry beans. Research supports the opposite: eating these foods improves health for most people. The 2010 Dietary Guidelines for Americans advise eating double the amount of whole grains, low-fat dairy products and cooked dry beans that we currently get in the U.S.

We all can learn some important lessons from our more primitive ancestors. “Think like a caveman” to improve your health by following these guidelines:



- Most of the time, eat foods that are less processed, are low in added salt and added sugars, and are naturally rich in nutrients.
- Avoid long periods of just sitting. Be at least moderately physically active for 30 to 60 minutes on most days. Although we no longer scavenge and hunt for most of our meals, our bodies were designed to be moved often!



Hunting Down Food Safety

Hunting season is here, and with it comes the opportunity to eat game meat and wild birds. These are nutritious foods, and most are naturally lean because of the animals' diets and high levels of physical activity. (Two exceptions are duck and goose, which have higher levels of fat than other poultry.) Before eating wild game or birds, however, keep in mind special food safety points:



Handling in the Field and during Processing. Do you know if care was taken regarding safe handling of the meat? Was the animal or bird “field dressed” promptly? Was the meat protected from contamination? Was it cooled quickly, and kept cool during the drive home? If you are a hunter yourself, know how to ensure food safety in handling the meat of game animals and wild birds, both in the field and during processing. For instance, follow the advice provided in the links at www.ksre.ksu.edu/foodsafety/p.aspx?tabid=33

Storage. If you will use it within three days, store game meat in the refrigerator. Keep raw meat and cooked meat separate to prevent cross contamination. Immediately freeze any extra meat. Prevent “freezer burn” by dividing meat into meal-size quantities and using moisture and vapor-proof containers or wrap. Press the air out of the packages before sealing, and label them with name of the contents and date. Freeze only the amount of meat that will solidly freeze within 24 hours. For best quality, use the frozen meat within one year.

Thawing. Thaw meat in a refrigerator, then cook the thawed meat within two days. Or, thaw it on the “defrost” setting in a microwave oven and then fully cook the meat immediately afterwards. Keep raw meat separate from cooked foods.

Preparation. Cook wild birds to at least 165 degrees F., and game meats to at least 160 degrees F. (Use a meat thermometer to check the internal temperature of the thickest part.) This will reduce your risk of getting a foodborne illness. Wild game tends to be drier and less tender than other meat, and often has a very distinctive flavor. To serve wild game that is juicy and tender, use a cooking method that adds liquids, such as stewing. You can reduce the “gamey” flavor by cutting the fat off game meats before cooking them. You can also mask that flavor by using extra spices or marinades. Marinating will also help tenderize the meat. Marinate all meats in the refrigerator. Recipes featuring 25 different kinds of wild game may be found at www.ces.ncsu.edu/martin/wildrecipes/list.html

Sources: (Accessed 9/23/2012): Kansas State University's [Care and Handling of Game Birds from Field to Table](http://www.ksre.ksu.edu/foodsafety/p.aspx?tabid=33) and [Care and Handling of Deer from Field to Table](http://www.ksre.ksu.edu/foodsafety/p.aspx?tabid=33), both at www.ksre.ksu.edu/foodsafety/p.aspx?tabid=33; USDA's [Game from Farm to Table](http://www.fsis.usda.gov/Fact_Sheets/Farm_Raised_Game/index.asp), www.fsis.usda.gov/Fact_Sheets/Farm_Raised_Game/index.asp

For more information about healthy eating, contact your local extension office. This material was funded by USDA's Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program. The Food Assistance Program can help people of all ages with low income buy nutritious foods for a better diet. To find out more, call 1-888-369-4777.



Dining on a Dime's Cooks' Corner

Winter Squash Soup (Makes 4 one-cup servings)

Ingredients

1 1/2 pounds of butternut or acorn squash
1/2 cup finely chopped onion
1 cup water

1 bouillon cube, any flavor
1 teaspoon ground cinnamon
1 cup fat-free or low-fat plain yogurt

Directions

1. Fill a large glass casserole dish, with a lid, about half full of water. Heat in a microwave oven on the "high" setting for 5 minutes. **2.** Meanwhile, cut winter squash into 6 or 8 pieces. Discard stem and seeds. **3.** Put squash pieces into the hot water. Microwave for 10 minutes, or until the flesh is easily pierced with a fork. Move hot squash to a plate and let it cool. **4.** Meanwhile, spray a 2-quart saucepan with non-stick cooking spray. Cook onion over low heat until tender. Stir in water, bouillon and cinnamon. Continue to heat. **5.** Scoop squash flesh from rinds. Mash it with a fork and add it to the saucepan. **6.** When soup is hot, stir in yogurt and serve. **7.** If desired, garnish each serving with thin slices of an apple. **8.** Cover and refrigerate leftovers within two hours.

Nutrition Facts per serving: 110 calories, 0g fat, 0g saturated fat, 0g trans fat, 0mg cholesterol, 270mg sodium, 25g carbohydrate, 4g dietary fiber, 4g protein. Daily Values: 360% vitamin A, 60% vitamin C, 15% calcium, 8% iron.



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