



Healthy Cuisine for Kids

HealthierUS School Challenge Cooks Training

Vegetables and Fruits

Eating more vegetables and fruits provides many health benefits. People who eat more vegetables and fruits are likely to have reduced risk of some chronic diseases. The Dietary Guideline for Americans recommends that consumers.... “Make half your plate fruits and vegetables.”

Fruits and vegetables are naturally low in fat and are important sources of many nutrients that are often lacking in children’s diets including potassium, dietary fiber, folate, vitamin A and vitamin C.

Health Benefits of Vegetables and Fruits

1. Eating a diet rich in vegetables and fruits as part of an overall healthy diet may reduce risk for heart disease, including heart attack and stroke.
2. Eating a diet rich in some vegetables and fruits as part of an overall healthy diet may protect against certain types of cancers.
3. Diets rich in foods containing fiber, such as some vegetables and fruits, may reduce the risk of heart disease, obesity, and type 2 diabetes.
4. Eating vegetables and fruits rich in potassium as part of an overall healthy diet may lower blood pressure, and may also reduce the risk of developing kidney stones and help to decrease bone loss.
5. Eating foods such as vegetables that are lower in calories per cup instead of some other higher-calorie foods may be useful in helping to lower calorie intake.

What are Dietary Recommendations for Vegetables

Vegetable recommendations for children and teens are 1 to 3 cups per day. Most children and teens fall short of the recommended intake, getting only 1 to 1 ½ cups of vegetables of the 1 to 3 cups of vegetables recommended per day.

The vegetable group is divided into 5 subgroups because each subgroup provides different nutrients. The subgroups are dark green vegetables, orange vegetables, dry beans and peas, starchy vegetables and other vegetables. About 50% of vegetables consumed are from starchy vegetables. The most common vegetable consumed by children and teens from starchy vegetables is French fries!

Although we need a variety of all vegetables, the Dietary Guidelines recommends that we especially eat more vegetables from the dark green, orange, and dry beans and peas subgroups.

Tips for including more vegetables in your diet:

- ✓ For peak flavor and cost savings, buy fresh vegetables in season.
- ✓ Buy vegetables that are easy to prepare. Pick up pre-washed bags of salad greens and add baby carrots or grape tomatoes for a salad in minutes. Buy packages of veggies such as baby carrots or celery sticks for quick snacks.



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- ✓ Keep ready-to-eat raw vegetables handy in a clear container in the front of your refrigerator for snacks or meals-on-the-go.
- ✓ Store properly to maintain quality. Refrigerate most fresh vegetables (not potatoes or tomatoes) for longer storage and arrange them so you'll use up the ripest ones first.
- ✓ Try fresh vegetables, plain or with a low-fat dip.
- ✓ Stock up on frozen vegetables. Use in a stir-fry or lightly steamed.
- ✓ Use a microwave to quickly "zap" vegetables. White or sweet potatoes can be baked quickly this way.
- ✓ Add vegetables to other foods: layer of spinach to lasagna, grate zucchini or carrots into meat loaf or hamburgers.
- ✓ When eating out, choose a variety of vegetables at a salad bar.

Tips for including more fruits in your diet:

- ✓ Keep a bowl of whole fresh or dried fruit handy on the table, counter, or in the refrigerator.
- ✓ Store properly to maintain quality. Refrigerate most fresh fruits (not bananas) for longer storage and arrange them so you'll use up the ripest ones first.
- ✓ Buy fresh fruits in season when they are less expensive and are at their peak in flavor.
- ✓ Buy fruits that are dried, frozen, and canned (in water or 100% juice) as well as fresh, so that you always have a supply on hand.
- ✓ Consider convenience when shopping. Try pre-cut packages of fruit (such as melon or pineapple chunks) for a healthy snack in seconds. Choose packaged fruits that do not have added sugars.
- ✓ Enjoy fruits as a naturally sweet end to a meal.

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How can I meet the HUSSC Vegetable Criteria? (For All Award Levels)

- ✓ Offer a *different* vegetable each day
- ✓ Serving size at least $\frac{1}{4}$ cup
- ✓ Offer dark green or orange vegetables on 3 or more days per week. Of the three, at least two must be different
- ✓ Offer a minimum of $\frac{1}{4}$ cup of dry beans and peas at least one time per week
- ✓ 100% vegetable juice can be counted only once per week.



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The following are the only foods that meet the HUSSC criteria for dark green or orange color vegetables.

Acorn squash	Collard greens	Kale	Spinach
Beet greens Bok choy	Dark green leafy lettuce	Mesclun Mustard greens	Sweet potatoes Swiss chard
Broccoli	Endive	Pumpkin	Turnip greens
Butternut squash	Escarole	Romaine lettuce	Watercress
Carrots	Hubbard squash		

The following vegetables may count toward the HUSSC criteria for a different vegetable each day of the week.

Starchy Vegetables: At least ¼ cup servings are required.

Corn	Edamame, green	Lima Beans, green
Green Peas	Soybeans	Potatoes

Other Vegetables: At least ¼ cup servings are required

Artichokes	Celery	Kohlrabi	Squash, white scallop
Asparagus	Cucumbers	Mushrooms	Squash, yellow crookneck
Bean Sprouts	Eggplant	Okra	Squash, zucchini
Beets	Green Beans	Olives, green or black	Tomatoes
Brussels sprouts	Green or red peppers	Onion	Tomato juice
Cabbage (red or green)	Iceberg (head) lettuce	Parsnips	Turnips, root
Cauliflower	Jicama	Radishes	Vegetable juice
		Rutabaga	Wax Beans

Purchasing Vegetables for HUSSC

- ✓ Purchase fresh and frozen vegetables, where feasible, to substitute for canned vegetables which are higher in sodium.
- ✓ For ease in preparation, purchase fresh cut-up or pre-washed bags of vegetables and salad greens. Add to salad bars, pre-package salads and vegetables with low-fat dip on the serving line or in a stir-fry.
- ✓ Purchase oven-ready fries, instead of fries for deep-fat frying
- ✓ Try purchasing locally when fresh vegetables are in season. Check the Ohio Produce availability chart handout.



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Preparing Cooked Vegetables for HUSSC

Follow the recipe or directions for exact cooking time to maintain flavors. Overcooking vegetables can change flavors of vegetables. Vegetables in the cabbage family develop a very strong sulfur-flavor when overcooked while other vegetables may become flat or dull tasting. To preserve flavor and nutrients cook vegetables in small batches placing on the serving line for immediate service. Vegetables maintain better quality and taste if held for a short period of time.

Vegetables cooked properly don't need a lot of added salt, butter or margarine. To maintain nutrition without adding extra calories and fat and sodium try

- ✓ Decreasing or omitting ingredients that add fat such as butter, margarine or oil.
- ✓ Replace high fat ingredients with lower fat options. For example, use low-fat cheese sauce on broccoli, low-fat yogurt in place of sour cream in salad dressing and dips and casseroles.
- ✓ Add herbs and spices instead of salt to enhance flavor without covering the natural flavors of vegetables.

For information on purchasing fresh vegetables in season refer to the handout, *Ohio Produce Availability*

For information on seasoning vegetables with herbs and spices refer to NFSMI handout, *Flavor Enhancement*

How can I meet the HUSSC Fruit Criteria? (For All Award Levels)

- ✓ A *different* fruit must be offered every day of the school week. Fruits that are prepared from the same fruit but are in a different form such as applesauce, sliced apples and apple juice are not considered different fruits for the HUSSC fruit criteria.
- ✓ Servings must be at least $\frac{1}{4}$ cup
- ✓ Fruits can be served fresh, frozen, canned, dried or juice
- ✓ 100% juice can be counted as a fruit only one time per week
- ✓ Canned fruit must be packed in juice or light syrup
- ✓ Dried fruit must have no added sweetener or non-nutritive sweetener.
- ✓ **Bronze and Silver Level:** *1 Fresh Fruit* must be offered each week
- ✓ **Gold and Gold of Distinction:** *2 Fresh Fruits* must be offered each week.



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Purchasing fruit for HUSSC

- ✓ Use first in first out procedures for storing fruit. Date the delivery box and use the oldest produce first.
- ✓ Follow storage recommendations from the produce company. Never store bananas in the refrigerator because the skin darkens and is unacceptable to use as a whole fruit. If refrigerated, peel the banana to use in baked goods.
- ✓ Ripen avocados, kiwifruit, nectarines, peaches, pears and plums at room temperature.
- ✓ Purchase fruits canned in light syrup or natural fruit juices.
- ✓ Purchase fresh fruits when in season.

Preparing fruits for HUSSC

- ✓ To maintain flavor and nutrient quality use fresh fruits at their peak of ripeness.
- ✓ Wash fresh fruits in cool water before peeling, stemming or cutting the fruit.
- ✓ Add an acid such as lemon or orange juice to fresh fruits like peaches, bananas, and apples. The acid, (vitamin C) keeps the fruit from turning brown, by reducing oxidation of the fruit that is exposed to air.
- ✓ Follow recipes exactly to maintain an acceptable texture of fruit. For example, cooked apples used for a fruit cobbler should be soft but not mushy.
- ✓ Frozen fruits should be used within the recommended time from the manufacturer. Date packages with an expiration date based on the maximum storage time. Thaw frozen fruit in the refrigerator. Add to a fruit mixture before they are completely thawed.
- ✓ Spices that are added to fruit dishes should complement the fruit but not overpower it.

For information on purchasing fresh fruits in season refer to the handout, *Ohio Produce Availability*

For information on herbs used with fruits refer to NFSMI handout, *Herbs Commonly Used with Fruits*

Challenge Recipes for Vegetable and Fruit

Featuring Dark Green/Orange Vegetables and Fresh Fruit as ingredients

Squish Squash Lasagna (Butternut Squash and Spinach)

This recipe has a delightful sweet flavor that includes butternut squash and spinach as the dark green/orange vegetables. Fix this like regular lasagna for your school. With a savory yet slightly sweet tomato sauce and layers of lasagna that melt in your mouth this is sure to please any crowd.



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Hatton Chicken Crunch

Voted as a recipe challenge favorite at Delaware City Schools this recipe features dark green and orange vegetables-that include fresh broccoli, carrots, and spinach. To help keep costs to a minimum, this recipe includes commodity popcorn chicken as the meat ingredient. Combining familiar food like the popcorn chicken with more unfamiliar ingredients like spinach is a great way to entice kids to try this tasty oriental entrée!

Spinach Strawberry Salad

Offer as a spring side salad or make it an entrée by adding commodity chicken breast to make a reimbursable meal. Spinach never tasted so good or looked so appetizing! A light tossing of a strawberry preserves and balsamic vinegar dressing add the zing to this beautiful salad. The fruit makes it colorful and tasty. This salad is best when tossed with the dressing just before service. The sugar free strawberry preserves in the dressing compliments the crunch of the fresh spinach leaves and the seasoned croutons!

Additional Handouts for this Session

Jazz Up Your Menu with Fruits
Quality Score Card for Fresh Fruits
Fruit Flavor Enhancements
Vary Your Vegetables
Vegetable Subgroups and HUSSC
Vegetable Flavor Enhancement
Quality Score Card for Cooked Vegetables
Ohio Produce Availability