



Summer Produce at its Finest

As the abundance of summer produce surrounds us, I think more and more about the importance of building a diet for my family which is based on fresh, colorful, naturally produced vegetables and fruits. Our garden is overflowing with several varieties of squash, my husband's beets and onions have just been harvested, and rainbow chard abounds. Our peaches, plums, and pears are within days of ripening, and I am somewhat mourning the end of strawberry season for us. Our garden has become a central part of our routines and our meals over the years, and it allows us both flexibility and creativity in menu planning and meal preparation.

In our work with children here at Thoughtful House, we all recognize and stress the importance of fresh produce for our clients on a daily basis. Current recommendations for vegetable and fruit intake for children are 9 (and preferably more) servings each day, across a variety of colors, textures, and flavors. Remember, too, these are child sized servings which typically means 1/3-1/2 cup of a specific fruit or vegetable – a small handful of blueberries, ½ banana, ½ cup broccoli, etc.

Recent research from the Feeding Infants and Toddlers (FITS) nutrition study indicates that 30% of children under the age of 4 do not consume *any* vegetables or fruits each day. For approximately 1/3 of the remaining 70% of children, the only vegetable which they do consume is the white potato, and you guessed it – primarily in the form of French fries. In the UK, facts are similar. A recent study highlighted by the UK-based World Cancer Research Fund indicated that only 1 in 5 children in the UK consumes the recommended fruit and vegetable intake each day. Coupling these facts with the particular needs of a child with a developmental disorder which may also encompass medical or behavioral food selectivity – and getting fresh produce into a child's diet can be even more challenging.

How can you make this happen?

So, how do you build meals for your family which adds nutrient density in the form fresh fruits and vegetables? Be creative, think outside the box, and try, try again.

For breakfasts, consider: risotto, oatmeal, or quinoa prepared with winter squash and cinnamon apple puree; sweet potato latkes with blueberries and coconut cream; scrambled eggs, vegetarian or chicken sausage, and root
(continued on pg. 2)

Volume 1, Issue 6 June 2010

Summer Produce – pg. 1
Upcoming Events – pg. 1
Roasted Beet Salad Recipe – pg. 2

Upcoming Events

June 20

Father's Day

July 1

Austin Autism Treatment Forum:
Autism Research Institute/DAN!
Conference highlights, Lucas
Ramirez, CNP. See
<http://www.meetup.com/Austin-Autism-Treatment-Forum/>.

July 4

Independence Day

July 6

Thoughtful House Community
Meeting: Appropriate, Nutrient
Dense Diets on a Budget, Kirsten
Bell, RD and Alan Gutierrez, RD.

July 7-10

41st Annual National Autism
Conference, Dallas, TX

September 7

Thoughtful House Community
Meeting: Optimizing Immune
Systems During Cold and Flu
Season, Lucas Ramirez, CNP, and
Alan Gutierrez, RD.

Nutrition Clinic Team

Kelly Barnhill, MBA, CN, CCN
Deirdre Earls, MBA, RD, LD
Kirsten Bell, RD
Alan Gutierrez, MS, RD

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(continued from pg. 1)

vegetable sticks; a green juice drink with celery, kale, and granny smith apples; and a baked or sautéed summer squash frittata or omelet.

For lunches and dinner, consider: steamed anything – swiss chard, kale, or beet greens; roasted root vegetables such as beets, turnips, parsnips, and sweet potatoes; a traditional succotash of lima beans, summer squash, zucchini, and corn; curried cauliflower and sweet potatoes – really!; and for those children with even more adventurous palates – a crunchy red onion, tomato, cucumber salad.

For snacks, consider: dehydrated kale chips; homemade root vegetable chips such as beet, sweet potato, and taro; lettuce wraps with chicken, white bean puree, and avocado; carrot and raisin salad; and crunchy sugar snap peas, snow peas, or garden green beans.

And now, armed with some ideas about vegetable and fruit options, how to approach these foods with your children? Some basics:

Let your children participate in the process and learn about food from its source. Teach them where real food comes from – be it from your

backyard, a farmer's market, or the green grocer's aisle. Allow them to participate in food preparation, whatever their ability and interest might be.

Model appropriate behavior. Simple enough. Please don't expect your children to eat food which you do not consume yourself.

Have fun. Help your child become more familiar and comfortable with new foods. Incorporate fruits and vegetables into art projects and play time.

Hide if you must, but only short term. We are not fans of sneaking fruits and vegetables into a diet long term through the use of purees hidden in baked goods, stews, soups, sauces, or casseroles. Each of us needs to know and appreciate foods for what they are – but when nutritional status is in question, strategic placement of vegetable and fruit purees or even nutritional supplement support is appropriate.

Try, try, and try again. Know that the research shows that it can take on average 15-20 offerings of a new food for any child to accept it. Don't be discouraged, even when you hit double digits.

Simple Roasted Beet Salad

1 pound beets (usually 3 to 4 medium beets), scrubbed and with greens removed

½ sweet yellow onion, thinly sliced

1/4 cup extra-virgin olive oil

1 teaspoon balsamic vinegar

½ teaspoon Dijon mustard

Pinch of natural sugar

Coarse Himalayan sea salt and freshly ground black pepper

Directions:

Preheat oven to 450 degrees. Cover a baking sheet with parchment paper. Place beets on the baking sheet. Lightly season with salt and pepper. Roast until tender when pierced with the tip of a knife, about 1.5 hours. Remove the pan from the oven and allow the beets to completely cool. You can also refrigerate at this point for use the following day. Gently slice to remove the skin. Cut beets into wedges. In a medium bowl whisk together oil, vinegar, mustard, sugar, salt, and pepper. Place the beets and onions in a bowl, drizzle with oil mixture, and toss to coat.

Research Update: in related news...

Work conducted by researchers at Cincinnati Children's Hospital Medical Center, Ohio and published online in the *American Journal of Clinical Nutrition* on June 2, 2010 sheds light on body mass and bone density. The aim of this work was to look and dietary intake, body fat, and bone mass in young children. 325 children aged 3.8 years through 7.8 years were enrolled and monitored over a 4 year time frame. Interestingly, they found that a diet high in dark green and deep yellow vegetables correlated with lower body fat and higher bone mass. The author's noted that the mechanism through which the intake of dark green and deep yellow vegetables affect bone mass remains unclear, but may be related to their high content of alkalizing minerals such as potassium. One conclusion was straightforward: "diets of young children that are high in colorful vegetables and low in fried foods may lead to lower fat mass and greater bone accrual in young children."