

NETA Quarterly News

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Early Childhood Providers



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Diversifying the Traditional American Diet

What do Americans Eat? We can no longer say that the typical American diet is meat and potatoes. Demographics show that the U.S. population is becoming increasingly diverse. In California, Latino and Asian are the fastest-growing ethnic groups. Each ethnic group has its own culturally based foods and food habits. Today, the American diet encompasses the varied cuisines of our diverse population.

Numerous cultural factors affect the diet of each person. These factors play an important role in how people eat, what is appropriate to eat, how it is prepared, when and with whom they eat. Complex symbolic, economic, sociological, ecological, and physiological reasons for how a culture uses food often escape outsiders' recognition. Often we are biased in favor of our own food preferences and believe that our habits are



superior to those of other cultures. Current demographic trends encourage an understanding of culturally based food habits on diet and health.

Often traditional foods are dropped or eaten less frequently when an immigrant is adapting to life in the United States. Adaptation is sometimes detrimental to an individual's health. For Latinos, research has shown that acculturation is linked to increased dietary fat and sugar. Those who are less acculturated consume less sugar and sugar-sweetened beverages, more fruits and vegetables, and more rice and beans. Similar trends are seen in other groups like Samoan-Americans, who have higher prevalence of overweight than native Samoans.

Understanding culturally based food habits is important. Teachers can help create an environment where everyone respects the diversity around them, including foods and food habits. They can also encourage families to continue practicing positive habits.

Photos: Suzanne Paisley, ANR Communications (top);
Network for a Healthy California (left)

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Suggestions include:

1. Implement NETA's "Tips for Busy Health Professionals," aligned with California's "Harvest of the Month" produce.
2. Introduce children to fruits and vegetables from other cultures.
3. Invite parents to come as guests to do demonstrations and tasting of cultural foods.
4. Display pictures of foods from different countries.

References:

- Kittler, P.G., Sucher, K.P. *Food and Culture in America*, 2001.
- Bryant, C.A., et al. *The Cultural Feast – Introduction to Food and Society*, 2003.
- Ayala, G.X., et al. *J Am Diet Assoc.* 108:1330, 2008.
- Taira, D., et al. *Hawaii Med J.* 63:150, 2004.

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The Power of Produce: Phytochemicals



Take advantage of the bounty of summer produce. Not only are vegetables and fruits naturally low in calories and high in fiber, vitamins, and minerals, they are loaded with phytochemicals.

Phytochemicals ('phyto' means plant) are natural substances that may protect against diseases, particularly chronic diseases like cancer, and may slow the aging process. Hundreds of phytochemicals have been identified, however researchers are still learning about their role in health.

Phytochemicals should come from foods, and not supplements. The relationship between food and health is complex. Replacing foods with supplements may result in the loss of beneficial food components or important interactions between food components.



Food Examples	Phytochemicals	Possible Health Benefits
Strawberries, blueberries	anthocyanins	Improvement of vision; help maintain a healthy heart; lower risk of some cancers
Carrots, tomatoes, leafy greens, peaches, cantaloupe, sweet potatoes	Carotenoids, such as lycopene, beta-carotenes	Neutralize free radicals, thus protecting cells from damage; lower risk of some cancers
Broccoli, cauliflower, cabbage, kale, and other cruciferous vegetables	Sulforaphane	Neutralizes free radicals, thus protecting cells from damage; lowers risk of some cancers
Garlic, onions, leeks, olives, scallions	Sulfides, thiols	Decrease LDL cholesterol

Fruits and vegetables come in terrific colors and flavors. To get a healthy variety, think color. Eating fruits and vegetables of different colors gives your body a wide range of valuable nutrients, as well as phytochemicals.

The table contains just a few examples of phytochemicals in fruits and vegetables. Eating a variety helps ensure that you receive the optimum benefits from your diet.

References:

- Some Facts About Phytochemicals. Nutrition and Health info-Sheet, Center for Health and Nutrition Research, Department of Nutrition, University of California Davis, November 2007. http://chnr.ucdavis.edu/content/Fact%20Sheets/2008/Phytochemical_FactPro2008.pdf
- Fruit & Vegetables Benefits, Fruits & Veggies More Matters, CDC, DHHS, NCI: <http://www.fruitsandveggiesmatter.gov/benefits/index.html>



Tomatoes

California grown tomatoes are available from May through December. Various different types of tomatoes, like cherry, grape, heirloom, beefsteak, roma, and more, can be eaten in all kinds of ways. Ripe tomatoes are best stored at room temperature. Once tomatoes are cut, leftovers should be stored in the refrigerator. Since tomatoes fall in the red area of the spectrum of fruits and vegetables, they provide significant sources of lycopene which



decrease the risk of certain cancers and heart disease. Tomatoes are also excellent sources of vitamins A and C.

Source:

http://www.harvestofthefmonth.com/download/Cycle%20II/Month%20I%20-%20Tomatoes/tom_edu_2.pdf

Recipes

ZUCCHINI AND TOMATOES

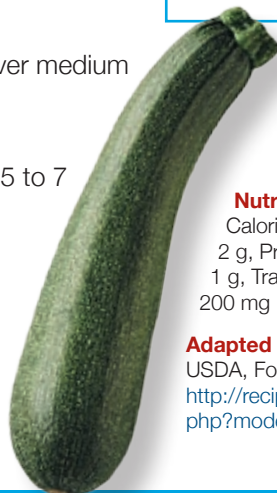
Serving Size: 1/2 cup
Yield: 4 servings

Ingredients:

- 2 tablespoons vegetable oil
- 1/4 cup chopped onion
- 1 chopped garlic clove
- 1 pound (approximately 2 to 2 1/2 medium) chopped zucchini
- 2 peeled and diced tomatoes or a 16 ounce can of diced tomatoes, drained
- 1/4 teaspoon salt
- black pepper to taste

Instructions:

1. Heat oil in a saucepan over medium heat.
2. Add onion and garlic.
3. Cook until tender, about 5 to 7 minutes.
4. Add zucchini, tomatoes, and seasonings.
5. Cover pan, reduce heat, cook until vegetables are tender, about 20 minutes.



BLACK BEAN AND CORN PITAS

A protein-packed mixture of seasoned vegetables, black beans, and cheese. Makes 4 servings. 1/2 pita per serving.

Ingredients

- 1 (15-ounce) can low-sodium black beans
- 1 cup frozen corn, thawed
- 1 cup fresh or no salt added canned tomatoes
- 1 avocado, chopped
- 1 clove garlic, finely chopped
- 1 teaspoon chopped fresh parsley

Nutrition information per serving:

Calories 96, Carbohydrate 10 g, Dietary Fiber 2 g, Protein 2 g, Total Fat 6 g, Saturated Fat 1 g, Trans Fat 0g, Cholesterol 0 mg, Sodium 200 mg

Adapted from:

USDA, Food Stamp Nutrition Connection.
http://recipefinder.nal.usda.gov/index.php?mode=display&rec_id=34

- 1/8 teaspoon cayenne pepper or more to taste
- 2 teaspoons lemon juice
- 1/2 teaspoon chili powder
- 2 medium whole wheat pita pockets
- 1/3 cup shredded part-skim Mozzarella cheese

Preparation

1. Drain and rinse beans. In a medium bowl, combine beans, corn, tomatoes, avocado, and garlic. Add parsley, cayenne pepper, lemon juice, and chili powder.
2. Cut pita bread in half to form 4 pockets, and spoon equal amounts of filling into each half. Top with cheese and serve.

Nutrition information per serving:

Calories 352, Carbohydrate 54 g, Dietary Fiber 17 g, Protein 16 g, Total Fat 10 g, Saturated Fat 2 g, Trans Fat 0 g, Cholesterol 5 mg, Sodium 176 mg

Source:

http://www.cachampionsforchange.net/en/docs/Lunch/blackbean_corn_pitas.pdf

Movement & Learning: The Kinesthetic Way

Just like no single shoe size fits all, no single learning style fits all. There are many different ways for children to learn. Cultural differences may affect learning modalities.

Kinesthetic learning is a style in which children learn by carrying out activities, rather than listening to lectures or watching demonstrations. Kinesthetic learners process information through their senses. They tend to be actively involved, preferring to do rather than watch, in a hands-on approach to projects. Skillful at gross and fine-motor activities, they often involve themselves in theater, dance, sports, crafts, and computers.

These techniques will help enhance self-esteem, and also memory, reading, math, language, listening, and more.

- Use tools or lessons which involve active participation.
- Take “movement breaks” during lessons.
- Encourage standing or moving, while reciting or learning new material.
- Play mirror games by facing them, creating different shapes and challenging them to mirror.
- The simple act of children forming letters with their body parts, individually or with partners, will help improve their language arts.



- Rhyming may be difficult for young children just sitting and listening. Encourage clapping or moving to the rhythm and rhymes of poems. Clapping, stomping, or stepping to the rhythm of words will increase their knowledge of both rhythm and language, and may even familiarize them with syllables.

Source:

<http://childparenting.about.com/cs/k6education/a/kinesthetic.htm>

Photo: Network for a Healthy California



Funded by the USDA's Food Stamp Program through the *Network for a Healthy California*. This institution is an equal opportunity provider and employer. The Food Stamp Program provides nutrition assistance to people with low income. It can help you buy nutritious food for a better diet. For information on the Food Stamp Program, call 1-888-328-3483.

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