

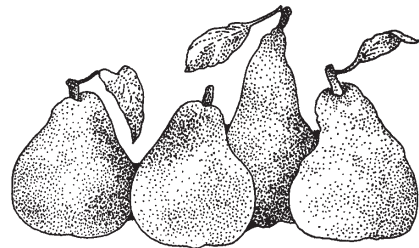
the pick of the season:

For more information about food preservation and other food safety issues, contact your local county office of the NDSU Extension Service or visit the NDSU Extension Web site: www.ag.ndsu.nodak.edu/food.htm



The printing cost of this brochure was paid by Healthy North Dakota.

The NDSU Extension Service is solely responsible for its content.



This material is based upon work supported by the Cooperative State Research, Education and Extension Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture, under Agreement No. 2002-51110-01512.

This brochure may be copied for noncommercial, educational purposes in its entirety with no changes. Requests to use any portion of the document (including text, graphics or photos) should be sent to permission@ndsuext.nodak.edu. Include exactly what is requested for use and how it will be used.

For more information on this and other topics, see www.ag.ndsu.edu.



County Commissions, North Dakota State University and U.S. Department of Agriculture cooperating. Duane Hauck, Director, Fargo, North Dakota. Distributed in furtherance of the Acts of Congress of May 8 and June 30, 1914. We offer our programs and facilities to all persons regardless of race, color, national origin, religion, gender, disability, age, veteran's status or sexual orientation; and are an equal opportunity institution. This publication will be made available in alternative formats for people with disabilities upon request, (701) 231-7881. 8M-7-06

Tips on Choosing Produce and Keeping it Fresh



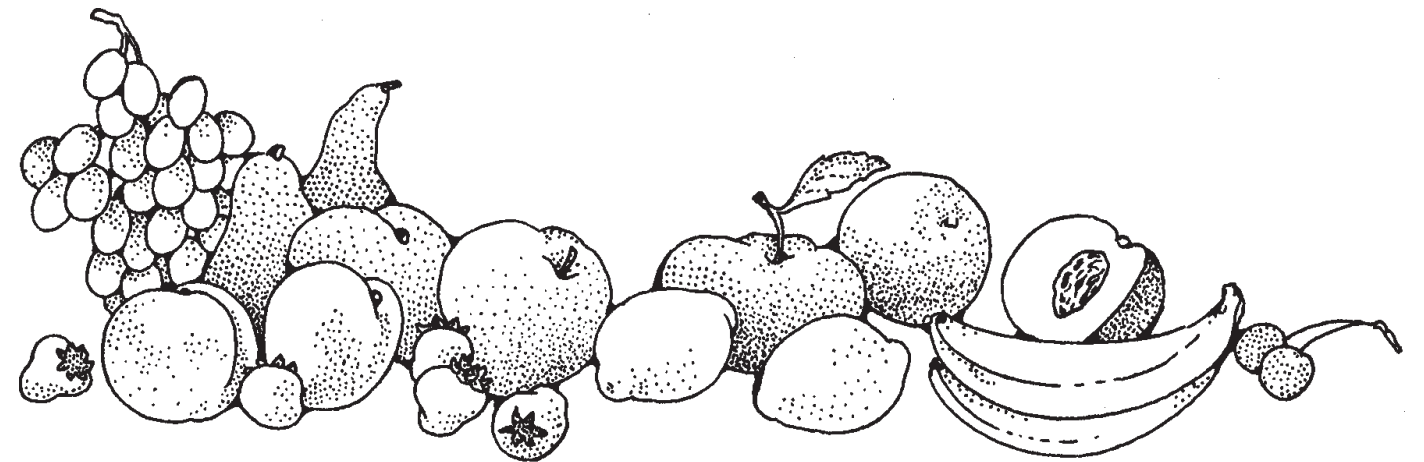
Julie Garden-Robinson, Ph.D., L.R.D.
Food and Nutrition Specialist

NDSU
Extension Service

North Dakota State University, Fargo, North Dakota 58105

Reviewed and revised June 2006
JULY 2000

Whether you grow your own produce or buy it at a farmers market or grocery store, fruits and vegetables are a colorful and healthful part of our diets.



Eat a rainbow of produce colors!

Fruits and vegetables are low in calories, and high in fiber and beneficial natural plant chemicals.

Vary Your Veggies

- Enjoy about 2½ cups a day!
- Eat more green veggies, such as dark green leaf lettuce and broccoli.
- Eat more orange veggies, such as squash and carrots.

Focus on Fruits

- Enjoy about 2 cups a day!
- Eat a variety of fruit, such as strawberries, plums, apples, raspberries and blueberries.
- Choose fresh, frozen, canned or dried fruit.
- Go easy on fruit juices.

See www.mypyramid.gov for a personalized nutrition plan.

Being Picky About Produce

For the best quality produce and to avoid throwing away spoiled produce, select an amount that you can use within a short time.

Follow these tips when choosing fresh produce:

- If you're picking your own, be sure to bring clean containers or bags.
- Look for produce that is free from unusual odors or colors and signs of spoilage, such as mold.
- Handle produce gently to reduce bruising. Bacteria can thrive in the bruised areas.
- At the grocery store, keep fresh produce on top of other foods in a shopping cart – and separate from fresh meat – and set it down gently on the counter at the checkout line.
- Remember that buying underripe produce isn't always the best option. Peaches, cantaloupe and nectarines are examples of fruits that may soften during storage, but they won't ripen.
- When buying cut produce, be sure it's refrigerated and keep it cold during transport. Keep it in a cooler with ice if traveling a distance.



To avoid throwing away spoiled produce, select an amount that you can use within a short time.

Savoring Safety by the Forkful

Even though fruits, vegetables and juice are nutritious parts of the diet, there are some food safety precautions. For example, contaminated melons, sprouts and raspberries have been linked with foodborne illness outbreaks.



Here are some food safety tips:

- Wash your hands for at least 20 seconds with soap and water before handling produce and any other food.
- Wash all fruits and vegetables with cool running tap water right before eating.
- Scrub melons with a brush and running water because bacteria can be transferred from the outside of the melon to the inside by a knife.
- Don't cross-contaminate. Use clean utensils and cutting boards when peeling or cutting up produce.
- Cut away bruised parts before eating. Remove the outer leaves from lettuce and cabbage.
- Keep fresh cut produce cold by placing serving containers on ice. Perishable food should spend no more than two hours in the "danger zone" (40 to 140 F).
- Store produce in containers that are free from excess liquid.
- Refrigerate cut produce and use within a few days.

Pressing Facts About Apple Juice

When fruit is pressed to make juice, any bacteria on the outside could get into the juice. Given enough time and the right temperature, bacteria can grow to levels that could cause illness.

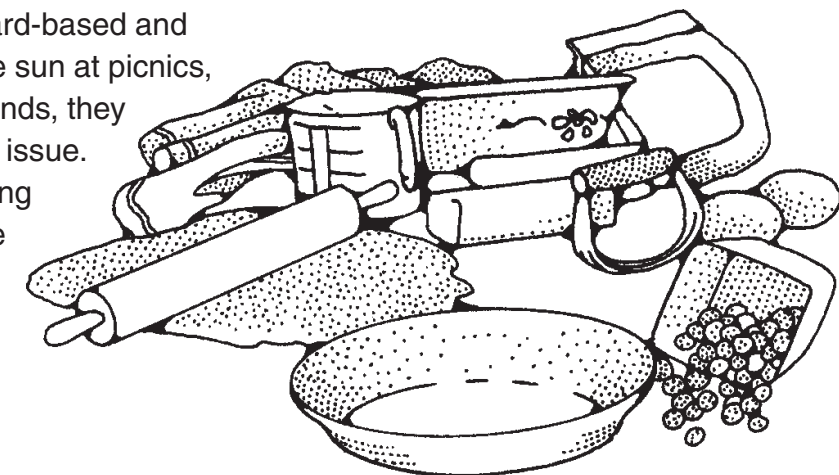
Unpasteurized apple juice sold at roadside stands or farmers markets has been linked with many cases of foodborne illness and even death due to contamination with *E. coli* O157:H7. About 98 percent of juice sold in grocery stores is pasteurized or heat-treated to kill bacteria.

While the immune systems of healthy adults may be able to tolerate bacteria in freshly-pressed, unheated juice, young children or the elderly could become very ill.

Unpasteurized juice must carry a warning label in grocery stores. If you make your own juice, wash the fruit before pressing and heat the juice to at least 160 F to kill bacteria. Store the juice in the refrigerator and use it within a few days.

Baking Summer Treats

Fruit pies, cobblers/crisps and kuchen are mouth-watering desserts using summer's bounty. If they're custard-based and allowed to stand in the sun at picnics, bake sales or food stands, they could be a food safety issue. Keep custard-containing items in coolers on ice before serving and during transport.



Saving Those Summer Selections

Fruits and vegetables can be preserved by dehydrating, freezing and canning, but using up-to-date recommendations is important. If you are tempted by home-canned goods at bake sales or farmers markets, remember they are not tested for safety as are commercial products. You will be eating them at your own risk. In fact, home-canned goods cannot be served at public events, according to health department regulations.

These are a few home food preservation tips to ensure safe food in your cupboard:

- Use a pressure canner and current USDA processing guidelines to can low-acid foods, such as vegetables and meats.
- Acidify tomatoes with the recommended amount of lemon juice or citric acid prior to canning.
- Use research-tested salsa recipes, and don't alter ingredient proportions. If you create your own salsa and want to preserve it, freezing it is the safest option.
- Seal jams and jellies with a regular canning lid (not wax) and process in a boiling water bath for five to 10 minutes, depending on altitude.
- Store canned goods in a cool, dark place. For best quality, use home-canned goods within one year.