



Food & Fitness



Alice Henneman, RD, LMNT, Extension Educator

This lively, health conscious version of summer's beloved bean salad, provided by the Dairy Council of Nebraska, is super simple to prepare. It may be made up to 24 hours in advance of serving, if you wish.

Black Bean Summer Salad

Makes 8 servings, about 5 cups of salad

- 1 can (16 oz.) black beans, rinsed and drained
- 4 ounces Monterey jack cheese, cut into 1/4 inch cubes
- 1 can (8 ounces) whole kernel corn, drained, or 1 cup fresh, cooked corn
- 3/4 cup sliced green onions with tops
- 3/4 cup thinly sliced celery
- 1 small red bell pepper, diced
- 3/4 cup picante sauce
- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 2 tablespoons lemon juice
- 1 teaspoon ground cumin
- 1 clove garlic, minced

Combine beans, cheese, corn, green onions, celery and red pepper in large bowl. Combine picante sauce, oil, lemon juice, cumin and garlic; mix well. Toss with bean mixture. Chill. Serve with additional picante sauce.

Focus on Food



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Q: Which provide the most nutrition—raw or cooked vegetables?

A: While it might seem that raw vegetables would provide the most nutrients, this isn't always true. Though heating can lower the amounts of some nutrients, it may also increase the availability to the body of other nutrients.

For example, carotenoids—such as beta carotene in carrots and spinach—are more readily available to the body when these foods are cooked according to a recent study. As reported in *UC Berkeley Wellness Letter*, processing breaks down certain chemical bonds to release the carotenoids in vegetables. People eating cooked forms of these foods had higher blood levels of beta carotene than those eating similar amounts of the raw vegetables. Another

study showed similar results with lycopene, a type of carotenoid found in tomatoes.

Cooking may also help with food safety. Heating vegetables can help destroy bacteria that remain if the vegetable wasn't washed sufficiently. (NOTE: You should still wash vegetables thoroughly even if you do plan to cook them.)

The answer: Variety is probably the key. Eat both raw and cooked forms of vegetables to help assure sufficient levels of carotenoids and other nutrients.

Looking for ways to fix vegetables—both cooked and raw? Visit the NEW "Cook It Quick" section of my web site (www.lanco.unl.edu/food) for tips on preparing healthy foods in a hurry. Access online links to sites that offer thousands of recipe ideas including over 15 pages that feature Nebraska-grown foods. (AH)

Clean Hands Campaign

Have fun using "glo-germ" to teach handwashing to youth and adults. Receive handouts for your group and a copy of reproduction ready handwashing activities. Call Alice Henneman (441-7180) to schedule a time to checkout the Clean Hands Kit and receive your materials. Kit must be checked out and returned within the same week. Available on a first come, first served basis. This activity can be used with any number and takes about 20 minutes, depending on the size and age of your group. (AH)

200 Youth Explore Healthy Snacks

"I'm going to try not to drink so much pop," an 11-year-old National Youth Sports Program (NYSP) participant said. Approximately 200 ten-through 16-year-old limited resource students learned about "healthy snacking" from Nutrition Education Program staff at a day camp sponsored by UNL and the NCAA.

Healthy snack food choices were the focus of the first one hour program. The food guide pyramid was presented with emphasis on choosing foods from the bottom five food groups which were referred to as "everyday" foods, and limiting choices from the tip of the pyramid or fats and sweets group, which are called "sometimes" foods.

Students surveyed before the first lesson and again after lesson two, indicated they

decreased consumption of "sometimes" or junk food by 30% and consumption of soda decreased from 2.1 cans per day per youth to 1.6 cans per day per youth. Approximately 1/3 of the surveyed youth indicated "YES" when asked if they would decrease the amount of pop they drank.

Students readily volunteered



NYSP students play "Who Wants to be a Healthy Snacker?"

to be contestants for "Who Wants to be a Healthy Snacker?" designed after the millionaire TV game show. The contestants in the "hot seat" answered a series

of easy to difficult questions about nutrition and snack foods. Local businesses and the Nebraska Department of Health

provided prizes to the contestants.

The second weeks' lesson focused on reducing the amount of pop/soda in their diets. During a demonstration on how orange soda is made, students were surprised to learn 12 teaspoons of sugar are in one 12-ounce can. They calculated how much "sugar" would be consumed in one

year from only one 12-ounce orange soda a day. The result was shown using actual bags of

See **YOUTH** on page 11

Freezing Q & A

Q: Why does a tomato turn to mush when it's frozen and then thawed?

A: When a food is frozen, it's the water in the food that freezes. As water freezes, it expands and forms ice crystals which cause the cell walls to rupture. This is why textural changes are more noticeable in vegetables and fruits with a high water content. For this reason, celery, lettuce and tomatoes are usually not frozen.

If you freeze tomatoes or celery, the resulting product works best in cooked foods, such as soups, where a firm texture is less important. Also, if you serve frozen fruits, they are usually best served before they have completely thawed.

Q: Is it necessary to blanch vegetables before freezing them?

A: Blanching is important for nearly all vegetables. Green peppers, pumpkin and sweet potatoes are three exceptions. During blanching, vegetables are heated in boiling water to stop or slow enzyme action. This helps prevent undesirable flavor changes during freezer storage. The amount of time for blanching varies according to the thickness of the vegetable. (See end of article for information on how to obtain more information on times for blanching specific vegetables.) Following the heat treatment, vegetables are plunged into cold water to stop further cooking.

Q: What causes "freezer burn"?

A: Moisture loss or ice crystals evaporating from the surface of a food produces freezer burn—a grainy, brownish

spot where the tissues are dry and tough. This area is likely to develop off-flavors but won't cause illness. To avoid freezer burn, package foods in heavy-weight, moisture-resistant packaging that is intended for freezing.

For more information on freezing fruits and vegetables, including blanching times, send a self-addressed, stamped envelope to: Freezing Fruits and Vegetables (#108-94) c/o Alice Henneman, NU Cooperative Extension in Lancaster County; 444 Cherrycreek Road; Lincoln, NE 68528-1507. Or, visit the Lancaster County Extension FOOD web site (www.lanco.unl.edu/food), scroll to the "Hot Topics" section in the gray box, and click on the "Home Freezing" link. (AH)



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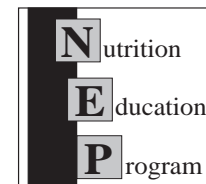
Tips and recipes for cooking healthy foods in a hurry:
www.lanco.unl.edu/food

FREE monthly Food Reflections e-mail newsletter.

To be added to the mailing list, e-mail Alice Henneman at AHENNEMAN1@UNL.EDU

Diabetes Study Course

Call Alice Henneman (441-7180) for more information.



Nutrition Education Program

for Limited Resource Families

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