

Canned, Fresh or Frozen: What Kinds of Fruits and Vegetables Do You Choose?

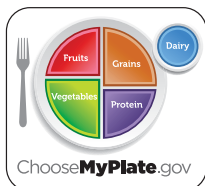
During the summer months, we can enjoy delicious, colorful fresh fruits and vegetables from a garden, farmers market or grocery store. When fruits and vegetables are “in season,” they are at their best quality and flavor. On average, kids and adults need 2½ to 3 cups of fruits and vegetables daily.



Quick Quiz:

1. According to MyPlate recommendations, how much of your plate should be fruits and vegetables?

- a. ¼
- b. ½
- c. ⅔
- d. ¾



2. True or False:
Canned, fresh and frozen fruits and vegetables all count toward the daily recommendation.

(The answers are 1. b and 2. True)

Keep the Nutrition and the Quality

If you grow your own food, be sure to prepare it or preserve it soon after you pick it to maintain the quality and nutrition. Food-processing companies freeze or can fruits and vegetables soon after harvest.

However, canned fruits and vegetables may contain added ingredients such as sugar and salt. Be sure to select canned fruit packed in juice or “light syrup” instead of “heavy syrup.” Canned vegetables are higher in sodium than fresh or frozen vegetables. Drain and rinse canned vegetables such as kidney beans, green beans or corn in a colander before adding them to soups, salads or stews. **Try these tips when preparing fresh vegetables:**

- Leave vegetables in fairly large pieces when grilling, boiling or steaming.
- Steam your vegetables in a microwave oven. Because little water is used, microwave-cooked vegetables keep their nutrients and color.
- Use as little liquid as possible when cooking vegetables. Use leftover cooking water in soups, stew or sauces.
- Don't overcook vegetables. Cook until crisp-tender to preserve the nutrition.
- Try a new veggie this summer. How about kale, beets or leeks (a “cousin” to onions and garlic)?

This program is funded in part by USDA's Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program. SNAP provides nutrition assistance to people with low income. It can help you buy nutritious foods for a better diet. To find out more contact your county Social Services office or call 1-800-755-2716.

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I have heard that fruits and vegetables have different health benefits depending on their color. Is that true?

Yes. Researchers have linked fruits and vegetables to certain health benefits. As you plan your colorful plate, keep this information from www.extension.org in mind:

Red (tomatoes, red peppers, cranberries, cherries and other naturally red foods): help maintain a healthy heart, memory function and urinary tract health

Blue/purple (blueberries, plums, blackberries, purple grapes, purple cabbage and others): help maintain healthy aging, memory and urinary track health

Yellow/orange (carrots, sweet potatoes, yellow peppers, oranges, pumpkin and others): help maintain a healthy heart, immune system and night vision

Green (spinach, broccoli, kiwi, green grapes, green peppers and others): help prevent eye issues such as macular degeneration and cataracts

White (bananas, garlic, apples, onions, cauliflower and others): help maintain heart health and reduce the risk of some cancers

Check out "What Color is Your Food?" at www.ag.ndsu.edu/pubs/yf/foods/fn595.pdf for more information.

FoodWi\$e Tip of the Month

Let's imagine a grocery store sign says, "2 melons for \$5, regular \$5 each." You like melon, but maybe you will not eat it all before it spoils. Do you have to buy two to get the special price? Read the signs by "special deals" or ask a worker. Maybe you can buy one for \$2.50.



Just for Fun

Which vegetable should you leave off a boat?

Leeks!

Colorful Pasta Salad

- 2 c. dry pasta (such as spirals or bowties)
- 2 c. broccoli florets, blanched
- 1 c. carrot, sliced, blanched
- ½ c. red pepper, cut into short strips
- ¼ c. green onion, sliced
- ½ c. Italian dressing, reduced fat



1. Cook pasta according to package directions, then drain thoroughly. Place the cooked pasta in a large bowl.
2. Rinse and prepare the vegetables as directed.
3. To blanch the vegetables: heat a pot of water to boiling. Add broccoli florets and carrot slices. Cook for about 90 seconds to two minutes. Drain thoroughly. (This step softens the vegetables but doesn't overcook them.)
4. Mix all the ingredients together. Add dressing and toss gently to mix.
5. Place salad in the refrigerator for at least 30 minutes prior to serving.

Makes eight servings (about 1 cup per serving). Each serving has 150 calories, 3 grams (g) fat, 27 g carbohydrate, 3 g fiber and 5 g protein.

Menu idea:

Colorful Pasta Salad, grilled or broiled fish (such as salmon), watermelon slices and low-fat or fat-free milk

Visit www.ag.ndsu.edu/food for the NDSU Extension Service recipe database.

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Contact the local office of the NDSU Extension Service for more information on food and nutrition or managing your food dollar.

