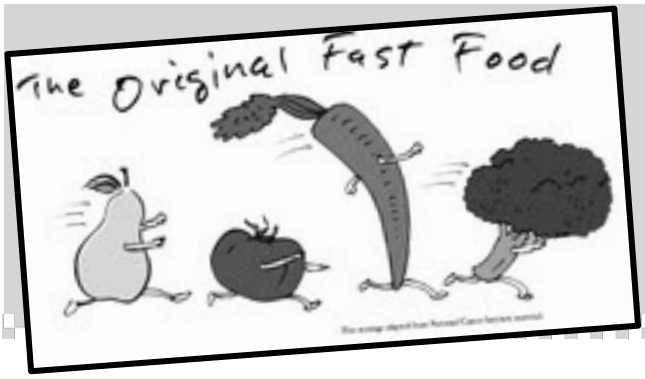

What Incredible Choices

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4-A

Growing a Simple Family Garden Together

Gardening is good for food budgets and family health. It's also a great way to spend time with children. Here are some smart tips for gardening success with kids. Need basic gardening advice? Call or visit a county MSU Extension office (list at **www.msuextension.org/localoffices.asp**).

Start with a small child-friendly garden.

Planting, tending, and harvesting provide daily opportunities for young children to learn valuable lessons, enjoy physical activity, and reap the fruits and vegetables of their labor. Window boxes and recycled plastic containers, like well-cleaned milk or detergent bottles with tops cut off, work well with limited space. Start small in a couple of containers or few square feet in your yard. Begin with a few easy-to-grow plants in a salad garden: leaf lettuces, radishes, a cherry tomato plant, and some fragrant herbs, like basil, dill, or parsley.

Choose child-sized tools and plants.

Kids do best with things that fit into their small hands. For tools, reuse kitchen spatulas and spoons (cheap at yard sales). Buy plants and seeds, such as carrots or cherry tomatoes that are designed to produce kid-sized vegetables.

Be prepared for less than perfect gardens.

Crooked rows and mixed plantings are common when kids garden. They can get attached to their weeds and want to care for them along with the real plants. Children also love to play in the dirt, so set aside a small area or container just for digging.

Garden together.

The most important part of family gardening is spending active time together, away from TVs, DVDs, video games, and cell phones. Take time to smell the herbs, roll in the grass, run in the sprinkler, and leave the garden for a walk around the block.

When can you start a small garden for your family?

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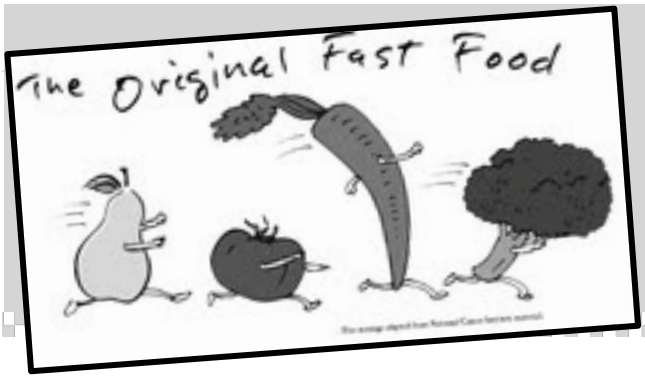

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4-B

STRAWBERRIES and RASPBERRIES

Strawberries can be grown in every state in the US.

HOW TO CHOOSE

- Choose berries that are plump, firm, dry, and bright red.
- Check carefully and do not buy berries with any grayish-blue, "hairy" mold.

HOW TO STORE

- Leave berries in their original plastic container or basket.
- Store in fridge for 1-3 days.
- Wash berries only when ready to eat.

NUTRITION FACTS

- Both berries are excellent sources of vitamin C.
- They are also good sources of folate and fiber, while being low in calories and fat-free.

Fun ways for your family to enjoy the sweet fruity taste of strawberries and raspberries

- Breakfast, lunch, or dinner – juicy, red berries can brighten up any meal.
- In the morning, add berries to cold or hot cereal. Use berries as a sweet topping for yogurt or pancakes.
- For lunch or dinner, add fresh berries to green or fruit salads. Just a handful makes a delicious difference.
- For dessert any time, enjoy their juicy sweetness with a little vanilla yogurt.

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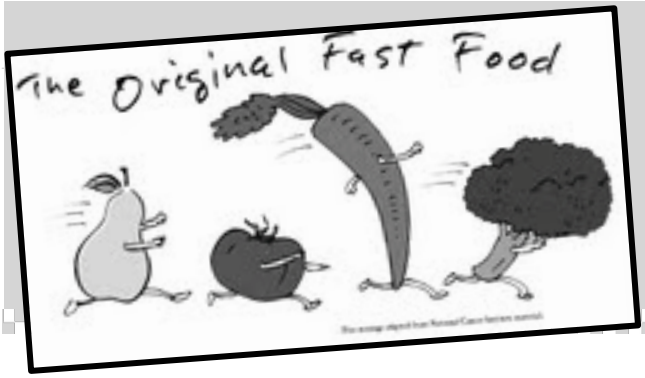

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4-C

PEAS, PEA PODS, and SUGAR SNAP PEAS

Peas have been found in ancient Egyptian pyramids.

HOW TO CHOOSE

- Choose peas that have firm, bright green pods.
- Go for medium size, big pods can be tough.
- Avoid pods with spots or wilting.

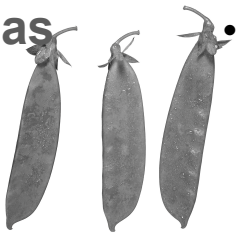
HOW TO STORE

- Refrigerated pea pods in a plastic bag with holes for 3 to 5 days.
- When eating the peas (and not the pods), shell right before eating.

NUTRITION FACTS

- Fat-free peas and their pods are excellent sources of vitamin C, as well as good sources of fiber, folate, and vitamin A.

Easy ways for your family to enjoy more peas, pea pods, and sugar snap peas



- Just eat 'em raw! Pea pods and sugar snap peas, especially when garden fresh, are a crunchy snack.
- Raw whole peas and chopped snap peas are also tasty in tossed green salads.
- Both peas and whole pods make a sweet addition to any stir-fried dish.
- Brighten up any soup, stew, or casserole with a handful of whole peas. They just take a minute to cook!

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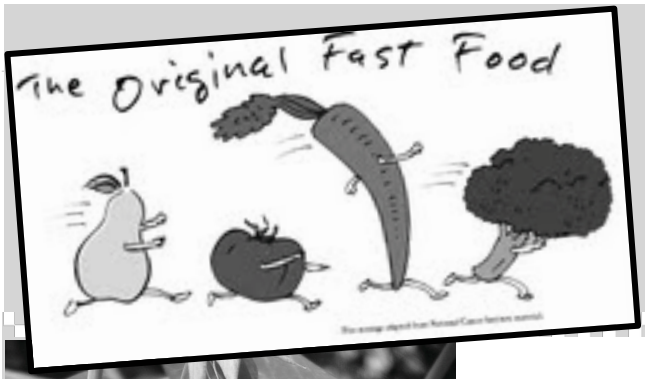

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4-D

Put on a Pea Tasting Party

When preschool or Head Start teachers introduce a new food to kids, they make it a fun, educational, and tasty activity! Here's how you can introduce peas (or any new vegetable) to your kids and their friends.

- **Get kids involved from the ground up.**

  If you have a garden, let children pick the peas from the plants. If you are at farmers' market or the grocery store, let them pick out which package of peas to buy.

- **Always make sure that vegetables are clean.**

  Wash pods under cold water. Throw out any yucky looking ones.

- **Explore vegetables outside and inside.**

  Take it slow and give kids the chance to explore peas at their own pace. Talk about how the outside smells and feels. Talk about the color and shape. Open a pod; talk about the inside shape and feel.

- **Eat and enjoy without pressure.**

  Kids will often naturally taste vegetables as you explore them. Encourage them to taste by taking a bite yourself and talking about the crunchy sweetness. Keep the process fun; forcing children to eat foods makes them want to eat it less not more. Serve the peas plain at first; they are very popular with kids. Offer low-fat dip only if no one is eager to taste plain peas (or other vegetables).

TYPES OF FRESH PEAS

Garden Peas:

Pods are edible, but may be tough. Meant to be shelled and eaten as the round peas.

Snow Peas:

Thinner, flatter pods. Meant to be eaten whole without shelling.

Sugar Snap Peas:

Plump, crisp pods with smaller, sweet peas. Meant to be eaten whole without shelling.

Five Green Peas

Finger plays are fun ways to teach children to count. This one is also a clever way to encourage them to enjoy peas and pods. Play it in the garden or in the kitchen as you prepare fresh peas.

Five green peas in a pea pod pressed	(hold hand in a fist)
One grew, two grew,	(put thumb and fingers up one by one)
So did all the rest	
They grew and grew	(raise hand in the air slowly)
And did not stop, until one day	
The pod went POP!	(clap hands together)

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