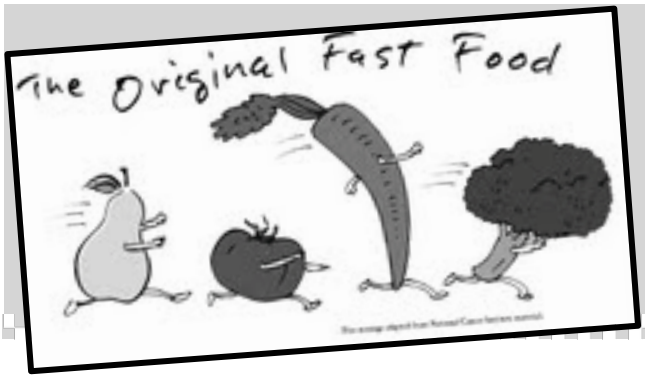

What Incredible Choices

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7-A

Helping Kids Eat More Fruits and Vegetables

Savvy parents know that their children need plenty of fruits and vegetables to stay healthy and to grow strong. Here are some tried-and-true ways to help kids to eat more fruits and vegetables – without food fights!

Introduce vegetables and fruit often.

Serve a variety of fruits and vegetables during the first years of your child's life. But, don't expect kids to enjoy new items the first time you serve them. It may take 7 to 15 exposures to a new food before a child wants to eat it or even try it.

Be a fruit and vegetable role model.

Kids take food cues from the adults around them. They will try and enjoy more vegetables and fruits when their parents, grandparents, babysitters, and teachers eat them. Forcing kids to eat foods has the opposite effect; they will actually eat less.

Keep vegetable and fruit snacks on hand.

Bite-sized vegetables and fruits are perfect for at-home and on-the-go snacks. Fun options are apple slices, celery sticks, or bananas with peanut butter. Broccoli trees and cherry tomatoes are tasty plain or with a little low-fat Ranch dip.

Let kids choose their fruits and vegetables.

Kids like to pick things for themselves. They love to choose their fruit and vegetables at farmers' market or the produce department. Make it a game (*choose a green veggie today*) or a family project (*everyone gets to choose one item for the fruit salad*).

Explore new fruit and vegetable options.

Tasting new produce is the best way to discover delicious flavors that the whole family can enjoy. Buy one very small new fruit and vegetable each time you shop. Soon, you'll have several new favorites on your produce shopping list.

How can your help your kids eat more fruit and vegetables?

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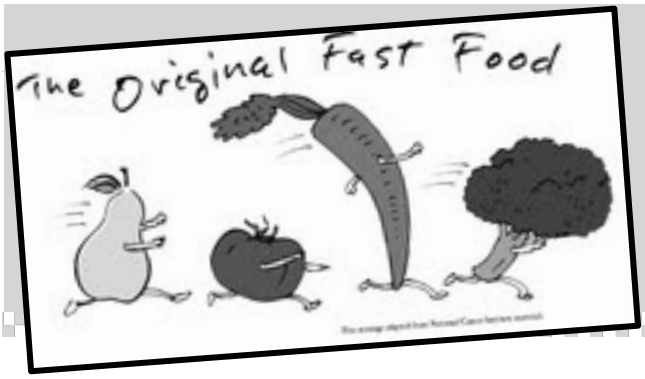

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7-B

MELONS: Cantaloupe, Honeydew, Watermelon, and More

Many types of Montana-grown melons are sold at farmer's market.

HOW TO CHOOSE

- Ripe melons will smell sweet and give to gentle pressure at stem.
- Choose heavy melons without bruising or soft spots.

HOW TO STORE

- Store whole melons at room temperature for up to one week.
- Refrigerate cut melon in an airtight container for up to 5 days.

NUTRITION FACTS

- All melons are good sources of vitamin C. Those with deep orange or red-colored flesh are also good sources of vitamin A.

Fun ways for your family to enjoy sweet summery flavors of melons

- Wash, slice, peel, and cut melons into pieces for a sweet snack, just how nature intended!
- For cool snack kebobs, put pieces of melon and other fruit onto skewers or plastic straws.
- Combine pieces of melon with other fresh fruits in a salad. Toss with a light vinaigrette or low-fat yogurt.
- For a simple, snazzy look, serve salad in half a melon where the flesh has been cut out.

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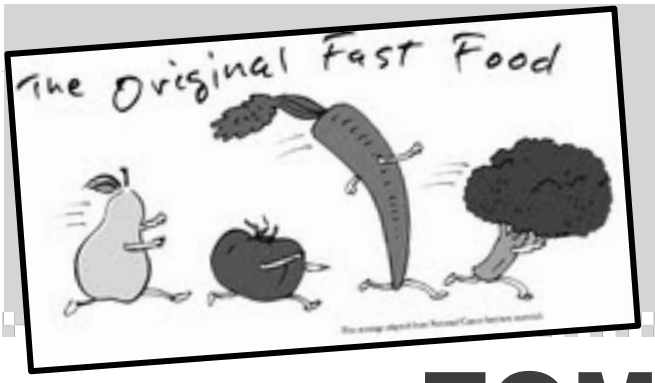

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7-C

TOMATOES:

Roma, Cherry, Grape and More

Although we call them vegetables, tomatoes are actually a fruit.

HOW TO CHOOSE

- Pick tomatoes with bright shiny skins.
- They should feel firm and heavy for their size.
- Avoid wrinkled skin or soft spots.

HOW TO STORE

- Store tomatoes on the kitchen counter away from direct sun. Do not keep in the refrigerator.
- Use within one week of ripening.

NUTRITION FACTS

- Excellent sources of vitamins C and A, tomatoes are also high in lycopene, which helps reduce the risk of several cancers.

Easy ways for your family to enjoy the tangy taste of tomato nutrition

- Pop cherry or grape tomatoes whole as a snack. To prevent choking, cut in half for small children.
- Slice fresh tomatoes in any sandwich or use on top of pizza instead of sauce.
- Fresh tomato salsa is totally delicious with any taco or burrito. Chop fresh tomatoes with peppers (hot or not) and onions. Add chopped cucumbers, cooked black beans, or corn kernels for fun!

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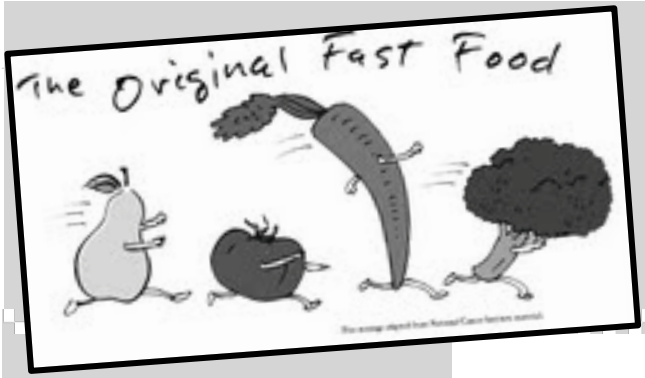

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7-D

Ten Terrific TOMATO Tricks

1. **Enjoy a whole tomato.** Pop a grape or cherry tomato right into your mouth. Cut in half for children under 4 years.
2. **Slice tomatoes for a simple salad.** Alternate tomatoes with sliced cucumbers on a plate. Drizzle with low-fat dressing.
3. **Toss tomatoes into a green salad.** Red tomato pieces brighten salads made with leafy lettuces and other vegetables.
4. **Dice tomatoes for fresh salsa.** Mix small bits of tomato with bell peppers, onions, garlic, and maybe a little chili powder.
5. **Add tomatoes to tacos or burritos.** Fresh tomatoes or fresh salsa are natural additions to all your favorite Mexican foods.
6. **Top pizza with fresh tomato slices.** It's as easy as pie: Slice tomatoes thinly and put on homemade or prepared pizzas.
7. **Put tomato slices into sandwiches.** Lettuce and tomato are the perfect combo for tuna, ham, and other tasty sandwiches.
8. **Stir fresh tomatoes into canned soup.** For flavor and nutrition, add tomato pieces as the soup is heating on stovetop.
9. **Freshen up prepared tomato sauce.** Add chopped tomatoes to a can or jar of sauce as you heat it up for a pasta dinner
10. **Chop tomatoes into casseroles and crock pots.** Almost any recipe benefits from a half-cup or more of fresh tomatoes.

Types of Tomatoes

A wide variety of tomatoes are available at farmers' markets and for growing in home gardens. Here are a few of the common ones.

Cherry, grape, and other dwarf varieties: Designed to be eaten fresh and whole, these tiny tomatoes are great for container gardening.

Roma and Italian: These fruits are a little firmer and more oblong than round. They are great for cooked tomato dishes, like pasta sauces.

Beefsteak and large types: These large, meaty tomatoes are perfect for slicing and using in sandwiches, salads, salsas, and Mexican dishes.

Heirloom varieties: These farm-fresh tomatoes come in a wide variety of colors, shapes, and sizes. Ask farmers about best ways to serve them.

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