



Mealtime Memo

for Child Care

Organic Fruits and Vegetables – Are They Better? **P.01-P.02**



Vegetable of the Month **P.02**

Recipe of the Month **P.03**

Nutrition Fact **P.03**

References **P.04**



Organic Fruits and Vegetables – Are They Better?

In the past few years, organic foods have grown in popularity among many people. In return, more and more grocery stores have begun carrying organic foods, such as organic fruits and vegetables. With organic foods' increasing popularity, many people pose the question, "Are organic foods better than non-organic foods?" Some may argue "yes" because of the harvesting methods, while others may say "no" because of the varied cost of organic versus non-organic foods. Ultimately, purchasing organic foods is a personal decision; however, knowing where they come from and how to find them may help you decide



if they are best for you and your child care program.

First, where do organic foods come from? Organic foods are produced and handled by certified organic farmers and manufacturers. Organic farmers use renewable

resources and approved fertilizers and pesticides to produce fruits and vegetables. More specifically, organic farmers take a more natural approach to harvesting crops. They use compost, crop rotation, and green manure crops to fertilize the soil and promote crop growth. Additionally, manufacturers process, package, and store organic food products in a way that prevents the combining of non-organic products.

Organic Fruits and Vegetables – Are They Better? continued on page 2

Organic Fruits and Vegetables – Are They Better?



Secondly, how do you find organic fruits and vegetables? It is no surprise that food labels are sometimes a challenge to understand. For example, some food packages may have a USDA Organic Seal; others may state, “Made with” organic ingredients; while some foods may only list a single organic ingredient in the ingredients list. Not knowing the definition for each statement can result in purchasing unwanted items. Fortunately, the USDA National Organic Program created a labeling system that emphasizes key ways to easily locate and identify authentic organic foods.

When shopping for organic foods, look for the green or black USDA Organic Seal sticker, typically found on food or the front of the food package. The USDA Organic Seal assures that the food is 100% organic or at least 95% organic, and the remaining 5% consists of USDA-approved ingredients. While farmers are not required to use the seal, when shopping, it is the easiest way to identify certified organic foods. For example, if purchasing single-ingredients such as fresh apples or oranges, look for a smaller USDA Organic Seal and the term “organic” on the food label, as well as on the display in the produce section of the grocery store.

Some food packages may list “Made with” organic ingredients on the food label or food packaging. These food items are significantly different from those with the USDA Organic Seal. “Made with” organic ingredients means the food product consists of at least 70% certified organic ingredients. These food packages will not have the USDA organic seal; however, they may list “made with” and up to three organic ingredients on the front of the food package. Additionally, the ingredients list may include the certified organic ingredients.

Other food packages may list “specific organic ingredients” on the ingredients list. Food products with specific organic ingredients contain less than 70% organic ingredients, and they will not have a USDA Organic Seal. However, these food packages may list the certified organic ingredients as organic in the ingredients list, and the total percent of each organic ingredient.

In conclusion, shopping for organic foods, such as fruits and vegetables, can be easy if you know what to look for. Should you want to know which organic foods are best for you and your child care program, and/or you would like to have additional information, check out the USDA’s *Organic Food* webpage at <https://fnic.nal.usda.gov/food-labeling/organic-foods>.



Vegetable of the Month: Broccoli

It’s about that time – veggie time! The vegetable of the month is the oh-so tasty broccoli. Broccoli is a member of the cabbage family and is similar to cauliflower. It has been around for more than 200 years but gained popularity in the United States in the last 100 years.

Broccoli is a great choice of vegetable for many reasons. Fresh broccoli has no fat, little calories, and high amounts of antioxidants such as vitamin C. As an added bonus, broccoli comes in many different shades of green, such as dark green, purplish green, and bluish green.



Recipe of the Month

Broccoli Stir-Fry

As you incorporate broccoli in your menus, try this Broccoli Stir-Fry recipe from the University of Illinois Extension. This recipe provides a tasteful way to help the children in your care increase their consumption of nutrient-dense vegetables.

Ingredients:

- 2 Tablespoon toasted sesame seed oil
- 1/2 cup walnuts, broken or chopped coarsely
- 1/4 cup chopped green onions with tops (optional)
- 4 cups broccoli florets
- 1/4 cup red pepper strips
- 2 Tablespoon lite soy sauce

Directions:

1. Heat oil in a large skillet.
2. Add walnuts and onions and stir-fry for one minute and toss consistently.
3. Next, add broccoli and continue to toss for three to four minutes.
4. Add red pepper strips and soy sauce and continue to cook one minute longer.
5. Serve!

Prep Time: 7-10 minutes

Yield: 6 servings

Nutrition Fact

Empty calories are those foods or beverages that provide no essential nutrients or vitamins, hence the name empty calories. Five major sources of these empty calories include soda, pizza, fruit drinks, dairy desserts, and grain desserts. Empty calories can lead to weight gain and malnutrition. Malnutrition is when the body does not get enough food or enough of the essential nutrients from food. Malnourished children experience reduced physical and mental development. Good nutrition is essential for children to achieve optimal growth and development. Avoid serving food and drink items with high amounts of “empty calories” resulting from added sugars and saturated fats in your child care facility. Instead offer more nutrient-dense food options such as fruits, vegetables, and whole grains.



References

Reedy J., Krebs-Smith SM. (2010). *Dietary sources of energy, solid fats, and added sugars among children and adolescents in the United States*. Journal of the American Dietetic Association, 110,(10), 1477-1484. Retrieved from <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/20869486>.

World Food Programme Fighting Hunger Worldwide. (2015). *What is malnutrition?* Retrieved from <http://www.wfp.org/hunger/malnutrition>.

University of Illinois Extension. (2015). *Broccoli*. Retrieved from <http://urbanext.illinois.edu/veggies/broccoli.cfm>.

University of Nebraska-Lincoln Extension. (n.d.). *Broccoli*. Retrieved from <http://lancaster.unl.edu/nep/fruvegbw.pdf>.

United States Department of Agriculture. (2015). *National organic program: What is organic?*. Retrieved from <http://www.ams.usda.gov/AMSv1.0/ams.fetchTemplateData.do?Template=TemplateA&avIID=NationalOrganicProgram&leftNav=NationalOrganicProgram&page=NOPNationalOrganicProgramHome&acct=AMSPW>.



This project has been funded at least in part with Federal funds from the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service through an agreement with Institute of Child Nutrition at The University of Mississippi. The contents of this publication do not necessarily reflect the views or policies of the U.S. Department of Agriculture, nor does mention of trade names, commercial products, or organizations imply endorsement by the U.S. government.

The University of Mississippi is an EEO/AA/Title VI/Title IX/Section 504/ADA/ADEA Employer.

In accordance with Federal law and U.S. Department of Agriculture policy, this institution is prohibited from discriminating on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, age, or disability.

To file a complaint of discrimination, write USDA, Director, Office of Civil Rights; Room 326-W, Whitten Building, 1400 Independence Avenue, SW, Washington, DC 20250-9410 or call (202) 720-5964 (voice and TDD). USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

© 2015, Institute of Child Nutrition, The University of Mississippi, School of Applied Sciences

Except as provided below, you may freely use the text and information contained in this document for non-profit or educational use with no cost to the participant for the training providing the following credit is included. These materials may not be incorporated into other websites or textbooks and may not be sold.

The photographs and images in this document may be owned by third parties and used by The University of Mississippi under a licensing agreement. The University cannot, therefore, grant permission to use these images.