



Mealtime Memo

for Child Care

It's Time to Grocery Shop: Shopping the Safe Way **P.02**

Nutrition Tip **P.02**



Vegetable of the Month **P.03**

Nutrition Fun Fact **P.03**

References **P.04**



It's Time to Grocery Shop: Shopping the Safe Way

Cross contamination is the source for spreading illness-causing bacteria to various types of food. Not only can cross contamination occur in the child care facility, but it can also take place as you shop for groceries. For example, juice from raw meat, poultry, and seafood can leak onto ready-to-eat foods, or broken eggs can leak onto other food items or packages while in the cart. When shopping for groceries, it is important to make food safety your top priority from the beginning to the end of your shopping trip.

As a child care provider, one of the most essential tools for shopping is

the shopping cart. However, without taking precaution when using the shopping cart, it can be the primary source for cross contamination.

Begin your shopping trip by cleaning and/or sanitizing the shopping cart. Some stores may offer wipes for sanitizing the cart. If you are unable to clean and/or sanitize the cart, line it with unused garbage bags, newspaper, or shopping bags. This method will serve as a barrier for protecting the foods from the harmful germs on the cart.



As you place items in the cart, it is important to separate meats, poultry, and seafood from produce and ready-to-eat foods to avoid cross

It's Time to Grocery Shop: Shopping the Safe Way continued on page 2

It's Time to Grocery Shop: Shopping the Safe Way

contamination. Place all meats, poultry, and seafood in plastic bags, and then sit them on the lowest section of the cart or in the very back of the cart. This method will aid in reducing the risk of any juices dripping on or leaking down to other foods. Place produce and other ready-to-eat foods in plastic bags, and place these items in the highest section or the very front of the shopping cart. Then, place other items in the middle section of the cart. Taking these extra steps will reduce the risk of cross contaminating foods by separating them while in the shopping cart.

Knowing how to identify potentially contaminated foods decreases the risk of serving foods that can cause foodborne illnesses. While shopping for groceries, check the expiration date on all foods to ensure they will not spoil before you have the opportunity to use them. Check cans for dents or punctures, and avoid these items, as they could be contaminated with harmful bacteria. In addition, check to make sure dry packaging has not been ripped, torn, or show signs of water damage, such as watermarks, as these items could also be contaminated with harmful bacteria.

After gathering the groceries, it is important to ensure the foods do not become contaminated during the checkout process. Ask the cashier to clean the check-out belt or counter to kill any harmful germs that may be present. Begin by unloading the ready-to-eat foods first and meats and poultry last to ensure the foods remain separated during checkout.

Just as you loaded and unloaded the shopping cart, ensure all like-foods are bagged together. Only use clean bags, whether plastic or reusable fabric bags. When using reusable fabric bags, assign like-foods to certain bags, such as only using green bags for produce or tan bags for poultry. However, after each use the bags should be properly washed for the next shopping trip.

Remember, to make food safety the first priority to prevent cross contamination as you shop for groceries. For additional strategies for keeping foods safe, check out the Kitchen Companion: Your Safe Food Handbook at http://www.fsis.usda.gov/shared/PDF/Kitchen_Companion.pdf.



Nutrition Tip

Buying organic foods has been an increasing trend for some time now. Unfortunately, buying only organic fruits, vegetables, and other products marked organic can become very expensive. To aid in food cost when purchasing organic fruits and vegetables, select the “dirty dozen.” According to the Environmental Working Group (EWG), the “dirty dozen” are twelve fruits and vegetables that should be purchased organic to avoid exposure to high amounts of pesticides and chemicals used in conventionally farmed produce: peaches, apples, sweet bell peppers, celery, nectarines, strawberries, cherries, pears, grapes, spinach, lettuce, and potatoes. Remembering the “dirty dozen” can be helpful to avoid ingesting harmful chemicals and pesticides and may also save money on food costs.



Vegetable of the Month Broccoli

As part of the cabbage family, broccoli is known for its thick, green stalks topped with small florets or bulbs. Broccoli is high in vitamin C and folate and is also a good source of potassium and fiber. It is a very versatile vegetable that can be served fresh, boiled, broiled, steamed, or microwaved. Broccoli is typically harvested from November to May but can be found in the grocery store throughout the year. For optimal texture and flavor, select broccoli with compact, dark green florets and a tender stalk. Broccoli can be purchased in a bunch still attached to the stalk or prewashed and cut. When purchasing prepackaged assortments, carefully check the bag to make sure none of the individual cuts show signs of decay such as browning, shrinkage, or a slimy coating. When storing, place broccoli in an open plastic bag in the refrigerator to maintain optimum freshness. Wait to wash until right before use, with water only, to keep broccoli fresher for longer periods of time. In addition, this method will discourage the growth of mold after washing the broccoli.

Nutrition Fact

Did you know that the stickers on produce in the grocery store actually have a meaning? These codes are also known as a Price Look-Up code or PLU. Supermarkets have been using this coding system since 1990 to determine how to price bulk produce. The codes have designated numbers on them that identify the way the produce is grown. Understanding these stickers can be beneficial for consumers when shopping, because it helps them to know exactly what they are purchasing. The four- or five-digit numerical code identifies the product and also indicates whether the produce is grown conventionally or organically. If the code has four digits, then the produce is conventionally grown, but if it is a five-digit number, the produce has been grown organically or without pesticides and other harmful chemicals to help it grow. The first number of the code indicates if the genetic material of the produce has been altered to sustain growth and increase size. A four-digit code beginning with an eight means that the fruit or vegetable has been genetically modified, but if it begins with a nine, then the produce is grown organically and nothing has been added or changed. The PLU codes can help you determine exactly what type of produce you are purchasing. Check them out the next time you are at the grocery store!

References

- Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics. (2012). *Food shopping safety guidelines*. Retrieved from: <http://www.eatright.org/Public/content.aspx?id=6384&terms=shopping>
- Environmental Working Group. (2014). *EWG's 2014 shopper's guide to pesticides in produce*. Retrieved from: <http://www.ewg.org/foodnews/>
- Fruits & Veggies More Matters. (2014). *Broccoli*. Retrieved from: <http://www.fruitsandveggiesmorematters.org/broccoli>
- University of California Cooperative Extension. (2012). *Reasons for the seasons: Broccoli & broccoli rabe*. Retrieved from: http://ucanr.org/sites/Nutrition_BEST/files/73340.pdf
- University of Wisconsin Health. (2012). *Nutrition and health education: Grocery shopping safety tips*. Retrieved from: <http://www.uwhealth.org/nutrition-diet/grocery-shopping-safety-tips/37293>

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 the National Food Service Management Institute 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.

© 2014, National Food Service Management Institute, The University of Mississippi

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.