

Food for Thought

May 2020

Dig into Gardening!

Gardening offers family fun. Growing vegetables or herbs teaches children that plants, like people, need food and water to grow and stay healthy. Caring for plants helps develop responsibility. It also builds self-esteem by showing kids what they can grow! A garden can teach your child about new foods.



1. **Gardening gives a dose of nature.** Kids love to play in the dirt and gardening is the perfect outlet for that passion. Even very young children can help in the garden by digging holes and putting seeds in the ground. Older children can transfer seedlings into the ground, water the garden and harvest mature crops. They can also pull or rake out weeds and debris. Studies show children are happier, healthier, smarter and more self-disciplined when they have regular opportunities to be outdoors.
2. **Start a container garden.** No yard? No problem! Try using large pots placed on the patio or porch to grow foods such as tomatoes, salad greens and even cucumbers. Most herbs can grow in small pots on indoor windowsills. For tips on container gardening go to: <http://web.cals.uidaho.edu/idahogardens/category/ornamentals/containers/>
3. **Gardening is a great workout.** Gardening tasks provide exercise (digging, hoeing, toting water, etc.). Inspire your kids to help by turning garden work into play: For example, challenge your kids to a weeding contest (who can pull the most weeds in 15 minutes).
4. **Gardening adds nutrition to your diet and makes healthy eating fun.** Studies show that gardening can increase a child's intake of fruits and vegetables, nutrition knowledge and preference for vegetables. Kids usually taste what they grow!
5. **Gardening stimulates your brain.** Gardening is not only a hands-on way to teach children about where food comes from; it also builds math, science and environmental skills.
6. **Gardening can help your food budget.** Gardening can provide your family low cost fresh produce freeing up money from your food budget to spend on other things. Many people don't know that food stamps can be used to purchase food producing seeds and plants.



7. **Gardening can help alleviate stress.** During these challenging times, what better way to reduce your stress than spending 30 minutes a day outside working on your garden whether it be in a container or the ground.

Homemade Salsa

1 cup fresh tomatoes, diced
½ cup onion, diced
2 Tbp. lime juice

½ cup corn kernels, fresh or frozen
1 Tbsp. (or less) jalapeno peppers, chopped
2 cloves fresh garlic, finely diced

1. Combine all the ingredients.
2. Serve with low-fat baked tortilla chips or fresh vegetables, cut up.

Frozen Strawberry Sandwiches

1½ cups strawberries, fresh or frozen
¾ cup low-fat vanilla yogurt
12 graham crackers



1. Mash strawberries using a fork or potato masher. (If using frozen strawberries, partially thaw before mashing.)
2. Combine strawberries and yogurt in a mixing bowl. Mix well.
3. Snap each graham cracker in half.
4. Place a well-rounded tablespoon of the strawberry mixture on one cracker. Place another cracker on top to create a sandwich. Repeat to make 12 sandwiches.
5. Wrap each in plastic wrap, waxed paper, or a sandwich bag.
6. Put wrapped sandwiches on a flat surface in the freezer. Freeze for 2 to 4 hours.

Lentil Salad

2 cups dry lentils
1 cup parsley, fresh, chopped or ⅓ cup dried parsley
½ cup low-fat Italian salad dressing
1 cup chopped fresh tomato and/or cucumber (optional)

1 medium onion, chopped
6 cups water
Pepper

1. Rinse lentils and put in pan with water. Add onion. Bring to a boil, reduce heat and simmer. Cook covered for 15 minutes or until the lentils are tender.
2. Drain and cool. Combine lentils with parsley and Italian dressing. Season with pepper to taste. Toss thoroughly.
3. Refrigerate to chill before serving.

Sources: Family Fun Magazine April 2009; www.eatright.org; <https://extension.umaine.edu/food-health/recipes/> Retrieved 4/29/20

Eat Smart Idaho offers FREE classes that can help you learn how to eat well for less! During this challenging time stay tuned for some upcoming classes offered online.

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