



# Chef Charles

# Says...

May

## **Pick a Better ...Asparagus**

Part of the lily family, asparagus is grown in sandy soils and takes three growing seasons for its first harvest. To cook, wash well under cool water, then steam briefly, with the stalks standing upright if possible. Asparagus can be boiled for up to five minutes, depending on the thickness of the stalks. Other good cooking methods include stir-fry, or simply drizzle with olive oil and roast in the oven at 450 degrees for 10-15 minutes.

Markets should refrigerate their asparagus or store it standing upright in cold water. Place the stalks in the coldest part of the refrigerator, standing upright in a shallow cup of water. Asparagus should be used within a couple of days after purchase.



## **Question: Why are whole grain foods better for older adults?**

**Answer:** Older adults who eat whole grain foods instead of refined grain products may be at lower risk for health conditions that can lead to diabetes and heart disease. A recent study also found that older adults who choose whole grains have a lower death rate from cardiovascular disease than people who don't eat whole grains.

The study led by an expert in older adult nutrition, looked at how eating whole grains affects the metabolic syndrome of older adults. Metabolic syndrome is a condition where a person has multiple chronic conditions like diabetes, heart disease and high blood pressure.

After looking at three-day food diaries of 500 people over the age of 60, researchers found that the older adults who consumed more whole grains significantly lowered their risk of having metabolic syndrome. Study subjects who consumed about three servings of whole grains daily, including whole grain bread, whole grain cereal and brown rice, had a lower prevalence of metabolic syndrome than those who ate less than one serving per day. Cardiovascular problems and diabetes risk are starting to occur earlier now, especially due to the obesity epidemic. The next time you have toast or a sandwich; make sure you choose whole grain bread.

Source: American Journal of Clinical Nutrition January, 2009)

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## **Be Active Remember to Be Active!**

Regular physical activity may help improve memory in older men and women. As part of the Fitness for Aging Brain Study (FABS), researchers studied 138 participants with an average age of 69 for six months. Half incorporated 20 minutes of physical activity into their daily routine and the other half did not increase activity. In this first study of its kind, the researchers found a modest improvement in memory, with the benefits lasting at least six months after the study stopped.

Source: Sept. 2008, JAMA

*Information & resources for seniors with home & family questions*  
**ISU AnswerLine 1-800-262-3804**



## The Colors of Health

Fruits and vegetables come in terrific colors and flavors, but their real beauty lies in what is inside. Fruits and vegetables are great sources of many vitamins, minerals and other natural substances that may help protect you from chronic diseases.

To get a healthy variety, think color. Eating fruits and vegetables of different colors gives your body a wide range of valuable nutrients, like fiber, folate, potassium, and vitamins A and C. For more variety, try new fruits and vegetables regularly.

## Prepping Your Produce

Many people like to store fruit in the refrigerator for a cold treat on a hot day. But for ripening, fruits like melons, mangoes and fruits with pits (such as nectarines, peaches and plums) need to stand at room temperature. Their vitamins and phytochemicals tend to increase as they ripen.

Take Note!

- ◆ Use fresh produce within 3-4 days of purchase for optimal nutrition.
- ◆ Make sure your refrigerator is set to 40 degrees F or below.
- ◆ Blot damp produce with paper towels.
- ◆ Wash produce just before use.
- ◆ Wrap and refrigerate cut produce.

## Food Safety

## Resources

Food Assistance could be just a phone call away. Communities in Iowa use the 2-1-1 call system to provide help to all Iowans. If you want to find your local Food Assistance office just call 2-1-1. Remember that Food Assistance is the new name for Food Stamps. Look for more information and recipes at your meal site in May and June.



When shopping for asparagus, look for spears with undamaged tips. Thick or thin stalks are equally tasty, but you may want to trim the bottom of stalks that are particularly thick. Choose traditional green asparagus or experiment with white or purple varieties.

## Healthy Eating on a Budget



“Planning is the key to a food budget,” according to Jo Pickett. As a mother of four children and a retired nutrition program assistant for ISU Extension, Jo had plenty of chances to use those words of wisdom. While Jo is cooking for one person these days, she used to have more people at her table. And planning made the difference. She uses her experience and skills to just cook for one. Jo also likes to watch cooking shows on TV and read cook books.

How does she plan for success?

- ◆ If you want a balanced, nutritious meal you have to plan. It does not just happen.
- ◆ If you are cooking for one, cook small quantities; buy small amounts; and look for small packages.
- ◆ Plan to shop just once a week and don't buy items not on your list.
- ◆ If you use coupons, don't be fooled. Just use coupons for food you would buy anyway.
- ◆ Don't plan to eat the same menus over and over. That is tiring and you will not eat well.
- ◆ If food looks good, you are more likely to eat it. Remember to use color to catch your eye.

Jo's favorite appliance when cooking for one is her George Foreman Grill. It is so easy to cook one piece of meat, add a

**2** vegetable or two and have a great tasting meal.

### Meet Jo Pickett



## Good News - Rethinking the Road to Better Health

About three-fourths of American indicate that not wanting to “give up the foods I like” as the most common reason for failing to achieve a balanced diet, according to a national telephone survey commissioned by the American Dietetic Association. This common refrain reflects a belief that healthy eating means giving up certain foods. And it raises an important question: How much do you have to sacrifice to eat a diet that promotes health and well being?

Luckily, research does not suggest that you have to completely abstain from less-healthy foods. In other words, there is value in even the smallest steps toward a healthier lifestyle. A mix of ideas often helps people who want to eat more healthfully. How can you balance eating habits for better health?

Answers

B G O A T Q R A F N T N T Y D  
 V U T F U L M R I R R A A C O  
 L S C I D A G A E O M E J W  
 J D N K R U R A S C T I H N T  
 R O K A W G U T Z P L W W W  
 A M N P T N A R P O C L R D K  
 F T P U P O E E X P A E A K E  
 H O M T E F F A C H I L T G S X  
 L A E M N R O C T I E W L F N  
 K L O R S K N K B R R U U S R  
 B R O W N R I C E A Y D B G O  
 I Y S O R G H U M X R E L A C  
 F C G W I T L E P S U L F I B  
 R L N K G F A C A O B T E S W  
 S F R A W X I B X P E D F Y C



### Learn to prioritize.

Make a list of the less-than-healthy foods that you currently enjoy. How often do you eat them now? If you only indulge in a food once a month, its impact on your overall diet is probably too small to worry about. Instead, focus on the less-healthy foods that you eat more frequently. Try cutting these foods down to once or twice a week and find healthier alternatives for the other days.

### Rethink all-or-nothing.

Portion control matters. If you love chocolate, skip the king-sized candy bars at the drugstore checkout line and grab a smaller, higher quality one-ounce portion of chocolate. Then, eat the treat only when you can truly take time to enjoy it. Love pizza? No need to give it up entirely, but think of it as a part of your meal, rather than the whole meal itself. Order a small pizza and enjoy two slices along with a garden salad without guilt.

### Make your favorite food healthier.

If your favorite foods are high in fat or sugar, try experimenting with lower sugar or reduced-fat versions. You can also add vegetables or fruit to a dish to bulk up the portion without significantly increasing the calories. A traditional two-cup portion of pasta with tomato sauce receives a delicious makeover when just half of the pasta is replaced by a cup of vegetables. The adapted recipe has more nutrients and less fat for the same sized two-cup portion.

## Marinated

## Asparagus

- 1 pound asparagus
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 1 tablespoon finely chopped red onion
- 1 tablespoon vinegar - balsamic, sherry, or red wine
- 1 teaspoon lemon juice
- 1/2 teaspoon Dijon mustard
- Salt and pepper, to taste
- 3 tablespoons olive oil
- Lettuce leaves

Bring about 2 inches of water to a boil in a skillet large enough to lay asparagus flat. Add salt. Wash asparagus in cold water. Break off the tough base of each. Remove scales if they are large or sandy. Place spears in the boiling water. Quickly return water to a boil, simmer gently for 5-7 minutes. Asparagus should be slightly crisp. Drain. Place in an oval dish to marinate. In a small bowl combine chopped onion with the vinegar, lemon juice, mustard, salt and pepper. Whisk in olive oil. Pour over warm asparagus. Allow to marinate at room temperature until cool, then refrigerate until serving time. Return to room temperature before serving.

Makes 5 servings. Each serving contains: Calories - 92, 8 g fat, 6 mg sodium, 4 g carbohydrate

## Strawberry Smacker



Spread a thin layer of cream cheese onto a graham cracker. Top with sliced strawberries for a crunchy snack.

Pick a better snack



This material was funded by the Iowa Nutrition Network and USDA's Food Assistance Program. The Food Assistance Program provides nutrition assistance to people with low income. Food Assistance can help you buy nutritious foods for a better diet. To learn more about Iowa's Food Assistance Program, contact your local county Department of Human Services office. Call 2-1-1 to find out how to contact your local office. Information also can be found at [www.yesfood.iowa.gov](http://www.yesfood.iowa.gov).

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# Whole Grain Game

Whole grains are the entire seed of the plant including the bran, germ and endosperm. Whole grains may be ground, but nothing has been removed. Find these whole grains in the puzzle:

- Amaranth** - Staple food of the Aztecs, also known as pigweed.
- Barley** - Popular in soups, and used to make some alcoholic beverages.
- Brown rice** - Unmilled white rice.
- Buckwheat** - Not related to wheat. Eaten mostly in pancakes or porridges.
- Bulgur wheat** - A type cracked wheat frequently made from durum wheat.
- Corn** - Also known as maize.
- Cornmeal** - Ground corn.
- Kamut® grain** - Once known as King Tut's Wheat.
- Millet** - A group of small-seeded cereal crops.
- Oats** - A cereal grain that is rolled or crushed to make oatmeal.
- Popcorn** - Became a popular, inexpensive snack during the Great Depression.
- Quinoa** - Originated in the Andean region of South America.
- Rye** - Related to wheat & barley, but not to ryegrass grown in lawns.
- Sorghum** - Sweet sorghum syrup is similar to molasses.
- Spelt** - A common type of wheat in Medieval Europe that is becoming popular again.
- Teff** - Native to the northern Ethiopian Highlands in Africa, similar to millet.
- Triticale** - A hybrid of wheat & rye originally from Scotland & Sweden.
- Wheat** - The second most popular cereal grain produced after maize.
- Wild Rice** - The seed of a grass that grows in shallow lakes and slow streams.

B G O A T Q R A F N T N T Y D  
V U T F U L M R I R R A A C O  
L S C I D A G A E O I M E J W  
J D N K R U R A S C T I H H T  
R O K A W G U T Z P I L W W W  
A M N P T H A R P O C L R D K  
F T P U P O E E X P A E A K E  
H O M T E F F A C H L T G S X  
L A E M N R O C T I E W L F N  
K L O R S K N K B R R U U S R  
B R O W N R I C E A Y D B G O  
I Y S O R G H U M X R E L A C  
F C G W I T L E P S U L F I B  
R L N K G F A C A O B T E S W  
S F R A W X I B X P E D F Y C

Kamut® grain is an ancient relative of modern durum wheat is now being produced in North America. It is two to three times the size of common wheat with 20–40% more protein. Source: Purdue University Center for New Crops and Plant Products.