

## Put More Fresh Produce on Your Family's Plates

By Mareya Ibrahim

You know the bubbly friend you have, the one that everyone wants to hang out with: She's perfectly shaped, a little on the spicy side but definitely the most colorful one of the bunch. She's radishing!

Veggie humor aside, it's time to put fresh produce in your family's limelight (if it's not there already).

Bite per bite, many fruit and vegetables provide the most nutrient-dense power per calorie and more phytonutrients than we could even begin to understand. We need to teach our children to enjoy them so they have a natural first line of defense against the growing rate of childhood obesity.

But part of the teaching process will be to make produce a natural part of our children's everyday lives. Otherwise, vegetables could be the subject of a relentless shove around the plate, offered to the dog under the table or used as a basketball with the trash can as a hoop. Given the proper place they deserve, everyone reaps a wealth of health benefits and something real to chew on.

Top-quality fresh vegetables often get a lot of attention from top chefs because they understand the impact of a perfectly cultivated heirloom tomato or an organi-

cally grown strawberry on their plates.

An internationally acclaimed chef and James Beard Award-winner, Michael Mina elevates the importance of fresh produce by carefully sourcing products at each of his 17 concept restaurants.

"Better product is directly correlated with better flavor. When food is in season, flavors are balanced naturally," Mina said.

Mina also creates outdoor gardens as well as indoor living gardens.

Here are four tips for getting produce onto your plates:

### 1. Shop With the Seasons

There's an Arabic saying that translates to "in the season of the apricot," meaning there's a slim chance to none because the window for getting the darling little fruit is only four weeks. Fruit and veggies at the peak of freshness are unbeatable, giving them a fair chance to tickle everyone's taste buds.

### 2. Have a Tasting Party

The plethora of fresh produce we have access to is a royal gift. There are literally thousands of different types of jewels to pick from, but you may only purchase a handful regularly.

Experiment with new ones and hold a tasting party with a bevy of bites on each



PHOTO COURTESY OF MAREYA IBRAHIM

This carrot and avocado soup with coconut and fruit relish is a great way to get the whole family eating more vegetables.

plate, and rate each one. Get the kids involved in the action, weighing in on their favorites.

### 3. Make It Ready to Eat

Many a perishable suffers an untimely death, smothered by a plastic bag in the back of the fridge. Bring produce home and immediately wash, cut, and place in storage containers for easy access. Washing produce helps to remove harmful residue and prolongs shelf life.

### 4. Never Run Out

You may have the best intentions getting to the store, but the cupboard is bare and you've run out of juice.

To help prevent home and office sabotage, source a local produce delivery service that provides you with different fruits and veggies to play with. Play with color and textures and get in the habit of adding fresh produce to every plate. Your dishes will start to look naked without them.

Mareya Ibrahim is *The Fit Foodie*, an award-winning chef on *Everyday Health's* Emmy-nominated show "Recipe Rehab," and author and founder of *EatCleaner.com*. Her book "The Clean Eating Handbook," a guide on how to eat cleaner and get leaner, was released in May 2013.



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Women who completed a 12-week yoga class after finishing cancer treatment reported having more energy and their blood tests showed that they had up to 20 percent less inflammation than the control group.

## Yoga Can Lower Fatigue, Inflammation in Breast Cancer Survivors

Ohio State University

COLUMBUS, Ohio—Practicing yoga for as little as three months can reduce fatigue and lower inflammation in breast cancer survivors, according to new research.

The more the women in the study practiced yoga, the better their results.

At the six-month point of the study—three months after the formal yoga practice had ended—results showed that on average, fatigue was 57 percent lower in women who had practiced yoga compared to the non-yoga group, and their inflammation was reduced by up to 20 percent.

The participants had completed all breast cancer treatments before the start of the study and only yoga novices were recruited for the randomized, controlled clinical trial.

Participants practiced yoga in

small groups twice a week for 12 weeks. Women making up the control group were wait-listed to receive the same yoga sessions once the trial was over. During the study, they were instructed to go about their normal routines and not to do yoga.

"This showed that modest yoga practice over a period of several months could have substantial benefits for breast cancer survivors," said Janice Kiecolt-Glaser, professor of psychiatry and psychology at Ohio State University and lead author of the study.

"We also think the results could easily generalize to other groups of people who have issues with fatigue and inflammation," said Kiecolt-Glaser, also an investigator in Ohio State's Comprehensive Cancer Center and the Institute for Behavioral Medicine Research.

Though many studies have suggested that yoga has numerous benefits, this is the largest known randomized controlled trial that includes

biological measures, Kiecolt-Glaser said. Researchers recruited 200 women for the study.

The study is published in the *Journal of Clinical Oncology*.

### Fatigue and Inflammation

The research team focused on breast cancer survivors because the rigors of treatment can be so taxing on patients.

"One of the problems they face is a real reduction in cardiorespiratory fitness. The treatment is so debilitating and they are so tired, and the less you do physically, the less you're able to do. It's a downward spiral," Kiecolt-Glaser said. "That's one reason we think there are higher levels of inflammation in cancer survivors, meaning that an intervention that reduces inflammation could potentially be very beneficial."

Chronic inflammation is linked to numerous health problems, including coronary heart dis-

ease, Type 2 diabetes, arthritis and Alzheimer's disease, as well as the frailty and functional decline that can accompany aging.

All women in the study completed a number of surveys assessing their fatigue, energy level, depressive symptoms, sleep quality, physical activities and food consumption. They also gave baseline blood samples that researchers used to measure levels of several inflammation-related proteins.

Participants ranged in age from 27 to 76 and were two months to three years past the latest surgical or radiation treatment. Kiecolt-Glaser and colleagues deliberately selected women of a variety of ages, stages of cancer (between 0 and 3A) and treatment methods so the results could be generalized to a broad population of cancer survivors, she said.

See Yoga on B8

### RECIPE

## Chef Mareya's Carrot and Avocado Soup With Fruit Relish

- 2 teaspoons grape seed oil
- 1/2 red onion, chopped finely
- 2-3 large carrots, steamed and chopped
- 1 small Hass avocado, halved and seed removed
- 1 teaspoon fresh ginger, minced
- 1 3/4 cup vegetable broth
- 14 ounces nonfat coconut milk
- Sea salt to taste

### Fruit Relish

- 1/2 cup seeded pomegranate
- 1/2 cup grated carrot
- 2 tablespoons unsweetened shredded coconut
- Zest and juice of one lime

In a medium saucepan, sauté onion until translucent. Set aside. Wash carrots and steam or boil until fork tender, about 8 minutes.

In a blender, combine onion, carrots, avocado, ginger, broth, and coconut milk and process until smooth and creamy. Heat for about 5 minutes or if using a strong blender, process until hot.

In a separate bowl, combine relish ingredients. Ladle soup into a bowl and top with a teaspoon of fruit relish. Enjoy warm or at room temp.

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