

Specialty produce becoming popular

AP — Supermarket produce counters are taking on a special look these days, with bean sprouts, bok choy, guava and other exotic items catching the eye of food shoppers, says a United States Agriculture Department economist.

"Especially fruit and vegetable displays form a fundamental part of the new up-scale image of many produce sections," says Catherine Greene of the department's Economic Research Service.

Rising demand for specialty produce is in line with a general increase in fruit and vegetable consumption, she says. On the average, Americans consumed 427 pounds of fruits and vegetables last year, up 12 percent since 1977. That is a firm weight equivalent before trimming, processing and after-harvest losses, she says.

Greene, writing in the nation's National Food Review, said there are a number of reasons.

"AMERICANS HAVE become more health conscious, eating lots of fruits and vegetables as part of a well-balanced diet," she said. "Con-

Don't panic when power goes

Michigan winters can be tricky. Ice storms, heavy snow storms or high winds can play havoc with power lines. Generally once a year some of us experience power failure because of the weather. If not from the weather, perhaps the plug has become unplugged or the freezer just stops functioning. What do you do when the freezer fails? Don't panic. There are steps to take to make sure the food does not spoil.



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Resist the temptation to look inside the freezer. With the freezer closed food will usually stay frozen for two to three days if the freezer is full. A half-filled freezer of food will stay frozen about one to two days. Each frozen package of food does act as a block of ice protecting the food around it.

If you know the power will be restored in two to three days, your food will probably suffer little damage. However, for a longer period of time you might want to consider dry ice. Be very careful with dry ice. It freezes everything it touches. Use 25 pounds of dry ice in a 10-cubic-foot freezer or 50 pounds for a 20 cubic foot. Dry ice should keep the freezer temperature below freezing for an additional two to three days.

Do not stick your head into a freezer that has been full of dry ice for several hours. Dry ice can drive the oxygen out and there will not be enough for you to breathe.

IF THE FREEZER is full of meat it will stay frozen longer than one packed with fruits, vegetables or baked goods. The colder you run

your freezer, the colder the food. The colder the food, the longer it will stay frozen.

Following is the rule of thumb to remember as you go through the freezer and test the food. Thawed foods may be safely refrozen if they are hard in the middle, contain ice crystals or are still cold to the touch. Cold to the touch means 40 degrees and food that has been held at that temperature no longer than one to two days. Any package that has become soft and mushy and lukewarm throw away.

Be careful refreezing thawed meats, poultry and fish. Examine these packages very carefully before refreezing. Ground meats are particularly susceptible to spoilage due to the large amount of surface area. Discard any ground meat that is thawed to room temperature.

To be safely refrozen, poultry must be still partially frozen or contain ice crystals. Do not refreeze fish unless it is still solidly frozen. If poultry or fish is thawed, but still cold to the touch, cook and consume immediately or cook and refreeze.

Thawed fruits usually start to ferment. This will not make them dangerous to eat but will spoil flavor

middle and still containing ice crystals.

Do not refreeze thawed ice cream — the eating quality is very poor. Shake the cans of frozen juices. If contents are totally thawed, reconstitute and use.

The freezing unit above the refrigerator is more difficult during a power outage. Keep the door closed as long as possible. Generally the temperature in these units is not as cold as an entire freezer so foods will thaw quicker. Watch the ice cubes or ice cream. When they become liquid, then check the other foods and either cook and eat or cook and refreeze if possible.

Frozen bacteria is not dead bacteria; when they warm up they become active and can cause food poisoning. Use good judgment, use your eyes and nose to full advantage. Growing out questionable food is certainly cheaper than a trip to the hospital. Use the old adage, "When in doubt throw it out."

Try chili waved in oven

AP — If you like your chili on the mild side, try this microwave version made with pork and beans and whole kernel corn.

In a low-watt microwave oven, cook the pork or beef for seven to eight minutes. Then cook the chili for nine to 10 minutes.

EASY MICROWAVE CHILI
1 pound ground pork or beef
1/4 cup chopped onion
10 1/2-ounce can condensed tomato soup
17-ounce can whole kernel corn
16-ounce can pork and beans
7 1/2-ounce can tomatoes, cut up
1 tablespoon chili powder
several dashes bottled hot pepper sauce (optional)

In a two-quart microwave-safe casserole crumble pork. Add onion. Cook, covered, on 100-percent power (high) six to seven minutes or until no pink remains, stirring once.

Drain fat well. Add soup, undrained corn, pork and beans, undrained tomatoes, chili powder and hot pepper sauce, if desired. Cook, covered, on high seven to nine minutes or until heated through, stirring once. Makes six servings.

Nutrition information per serving: 343 cal., 22 g. pro., 40 g. carb., 12 g. fat, 58 mg. chol., 1040 mg. sodium. U.S. RDA: 25 percent vit. A, 49 percent vit. C, 32 percent calcium, 19 percent riboflavin, 24 percent niacin, 20 percent iron, 28 percent phosphorus.

Salmon Noodle Chowder nourishes

AP — Here's a nourishing soup with rich, homemade taste. Because you start with a convenient packaged noodle mix, you can ladle the soup up in a mere 15 minutes.

SALMON NOODLE CHOWDER
2 1/2 cups water
2 tablespoons margarine or butter
4 1/2-ounce package noodles with soup cream and chive sauce
1 1/2 cups loose-pack frozen corn, broccoli and red peppers
1/4 teaspoon dried dillweed
7 1/2-ounce can red salmon
2 cups milk

In a large saucepan bring water and margarine to boiling. Stir in noodles with soup cream and chive sauce, frozen vegetables and dillweed. Return to boiling; reduce heat. Simmer, uncovered, for 5 minutes.

Meanwhile, drain salmon; remove skin and bones. Break salmon into chunks. Stir milk into noodle mixture. Return to boiling; add salmon. Cook and stir for 1 minute more. Serve at once. Makes 3 servings.

Nutrition information per serving: 478 cal., 28 g. pro., 43 g. carb., 25 g. fat, 33 mg. chol., 785 mg. sodium. U.S. RDA: 39 percent vit. A, 45 percent vit. C, 19 percent thiamine, 25 percent riboflavin, 25 percent niacin, 31 percent calcium.

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