

What's in Season from the Garden State

Bi-weekly Highlights from Rutgers Cooperative Extension

July 3, 2006

Quit Beefing, Eat Seafood!



As summer shows up, folks should take the opportunity to eat some summer fish species that swim through our waters. According to Gef Flimlin, Marine Extension Agent for Rutgers Cooperative Extension, "Bluefish, fluke, weakfish and striped bass are four that can be caught on hook and line on the beach or near shore on a boat. All, but the striped bass, can also be found in your local seafood market. Offshore anglers target tunas, swordfish and sharks, which can also be found in the supermarket with the fish caught by our offshore commercial fishermen. All these fish can be grilled on the barbeque for easy and quick meals. Marinades as simple as some Italian salad dressing will spice up your seafood. Add some Jersey tomatoes and corn on the cob, and you have a healthy nutritious summer dinner. Remember - seafood is good for your health and everyone, according to the FDA, should be eating 2-6 ounce portions of fish or seafood per week. Get your Omega-3 fatty acids; they're good for your heart and your mind." Visit <http://www.rcrc.rutgers.edu/seafoodsafety> and <http://www.jerseyseafood.nj.gov> for more information.



Colors of the Garden

The compounds in plants known as phytochemicals and anti-oxidants, many of which give them their color, flavor and aroma, have protective properties in the body, helping prevent diseases and certain health conditions. The 5-a-Day the Color Way program (<http://www.5aday.org>) encourages eating daily from all color groups.

Judy Klavens-Giunta, RD, Program Associate, in the Rutgers Cooperative Extension's Food Stamp Nutrition Education Program, teaches these lessons in their Colors of the Garden nutrition program (<http://www.rutgers.njfsnep.org>). Below, Judy outlines what the different color groups have to offer:

Here's a sample of 5-a-Day the Color Way using the current availability of Jersey Fresh: Breakfast: Blueberries on cereal; Snack or lunch: sliced Jersey Tomato with basil or on a sandwich; Dinner: steam or grill cauliflower, yellow squash and zucchini.

Red or bright pink fruits and vegetables like red apples, strawberries, cherries, red peppers, and tomatoes have anthocyanidin and lycopene which help fight heart disease and some cancer.

Deep yellow and orange fruits and vegetables like cantalope, peaches, pumpkin, and sweet potatoes, have flavanols, which have anti-inflammatory and possible anti-cancer properties, beta-carotene, important for immune system function, skin and bone health and zeaxanthin which helps with vision.

Green fruits and vegetables like asparagus, arugula, broccoli and dark leafy greens (kale, collards) are very rich in the carotenoids beta-carotene, zeaxanthin and lutein which can prevent degenerative eye diseases and certain cancers.

Blue and purple fruits and vegetables like blueberries, plums, red cabbage, eggplant and purple potatoes have the flavanols anthocyanidin, and proanthocyanidin which are associated with heart health and may protect against urinary tract infection. They also have resveratrol, which may lower the risk of heart disease, lung disease and some cancers.

White/tan/brown fruits and vegetables though not as colorful as other fruits and vegetables have many powerful phytochemicals of their own. White peaches, cauliflower, garlic, onions, and turnips have flavanols and other phytochemicals called indoles which are considered to have anti-cancer properties.



New Jersey Department of Agriculture's Jersey Fresh Availability Report

Current:

Arugula and Kale
Baby Arugula & Baby Spinach
Basil
Beets
Blueberries
Cabbage
Cantalopes

Cilantro/Dill/Parsley
Collards
Cucumbers
Leeks
Peas
Peppers
Squash - yellow and zucchini
Sweet corn

Swiss Chard
Tomatoes
Turnips

Forecast (start date):

Eggplant - 2nd - 3rd week of July
Peaches - mid-July
Nectarines - late July



Where to find Jersey Fresh? Ask for it where you shop or dine or go to <http://www.jerseyfresh.nj.gov>



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All the Tadoo about Residue

Let's face it; it's a bug-eat-plant world out there. Well, it is if you're a farmer. Bugs, disease, and weeds can take a big bite out of your crop yield, not to mention customers want large, perfect unblemished, unbitten produce. Modern agriculture has a whole arsenal of pesticides to assist the grower in the battle of the bugs.



But this comes with a price: chemical residues that enter our air, land and water, not to mention on our food. Here we address concerns over pesticide residue.

Karen Anderson, Executive Director of the Northeast Organic Farming Association of New Jersey (NOFA-NJ) says, "Many consumers are choosing to buy organic produce to reduce their exposure to pesticide residue. Recent research* supports that choice and also demonstrates that organic farming systems also deliver environmental benefits, increasing biodiversity, lowering energy use, and increasing carbon storage in soil organic matter.

You can support local and organic by purchasing New Jersey-grown organic fruits and vegetables from organic farmers, at farmers markets and in health food stores and supermarkets that carry them. New Jersey certified organic farmers produce more than 60 different organic crops from March through December."

NOFA-NJ has a website that can help you find local organic produce at <http://www.nofanj.org>
*http://www.organiccenter.org/science.latest.php?action=view&report_id=51

But what if we aren't able to get all our produce organically grown? Here's the good news for New Jersey: tests for pesticide residues found levels on New Jersey produce to be *less* than national averages. According to Roy W. Meyer, Research Scientist at the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection, "The New Jersey Food Monitoring & Evaluation Program (NJFMEP) was initiated in 2000 by the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection, Pesticide Control Program (PCP) to identify and catalog pesticide residues on fresh produce being grown and sold in New Jersey. The project examines fresh produce available at roadside markets with markets in 19 of New Jersey's 21 Counties providing commodity samples.

Since 2000, 358 samples have been collected and analyzed, covering 22 different commodities typically grown in New Jersey and found on roadside stands. The laboratory analysis of these samples can find over 300 different pesticide residues. Eighty-two percent of the samples collected were grown in New Jersey. About 45% of the samples collected had at least one pesticide residue detected. By comparison, the nationwide USDA Pesticide Data Program (PDP) reported that 72% of the samples for the 2000 season had residue detections. Only 1% of the samples exceeded a regulatory standard or guideline as compared with around 1.5% nationally; in fact, the vast majority of the detections are well below standards or guidelines. While New Jersey's sample size is much smaller and has a different focus than the PDP, this does provide a useful comparison with a national program."

How is it that New Jersey's conventional farmers are able to keep pesticide levels down? Many farmers in New Jersey use Integrated Pest Management (IPM) - a practice that is based on timing pesticide sprays to insect life cycles. Explains Jack Rabin, Associate Director for Farm Services, New Jersey Agricultural Experiment Station (NJAES), "If we picture each crop - pest - environment complex as nature's continuous circle, NJAES performs IPM field research identifying and breaking the circle at its weakest point, with minimal risk and impact on the environment. Understanding each crop-pest complex circle takes years of dedicated costly field research to validate and deliver tactics that work for farmers in their fields and consumers on their plates. While we envision the best IPM and sustainable farming practices as the "farmers' footsteps in the field," there is a deep body of NJAES IPM research validating the environmentally sound decisions those footsteps make!"

Still concerned about pesticide residues? The good news is washing with water is highly effective at removing residues. According to Mark Robson, Ph.D., M.P.H., Chair of the Department of Environmental and Occupational Health at UMDNJ, "Pesticide washes are effective for the removal of some compounds, but studies at University of California, Riverside have found that many produce washes are not much more effective than plain tap water. Another study published in *Food Service Technology* (2003) showed water rinsing and paper towel wiping were superior to other methods tested in removing microbial contamination and pesticides."



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