

Eating More Plants in a World of Meat Eaters

By Kris Williams, MS, RD, LD Master Gardener of Greene County

The way we eat in America makes us sick and is having a negative impact on the environment. The good news is that changing our diet results in better health and can reduce the environmental impact. So what is the problem? One-third of Americans' total calorie intake comes from nutrient-poor "food-like products" – sweets, snacks, - i.e processed food products. Seven percent of Americans' intake comes from soda – more than from fruits or vegetables. Twenty-three percent of Americans' calories come from meat, fish, poultry and dairy. That adds up to 63%! *Where are the plants??!*

To eat well is to first eat moderately and limit eating to real food. Real food is not processed. Taking this a step further, the simple guiding principle to improved health is to: eat less meat and junk/processed food, eat more vegetables (& fruits), more beans/legumes and more whole grains. This shift in eating can have an immediate impact on your health, while also helping the environment.

Shifting consumption patterns begins with eating less meat, but also better meat. Animals that are locally and humanely raised and fed their native foods are healthier, more nutritious food for us. Less meat consumption also results in less impact on the environment. From a global standpoint, livestock is the fastest growing segment of agriculture. The production of poultry and pigs has quadrupled, while cattle, goats and sheep have doubled. Because the consumption of meat has increased, along with the ongoing increase in the global population, it is predicted that meat production will double again by 2050. Factory farming is the only way to keep up with the growth in demand for these quantities of meat, eggs, milk and dairy. Even this inferior method of farming is likely unsustainable over time. The environmental and health impact of factory farming should not be ignored. Estimates are that the average American meat eater is responsible for one and a half tons more CO2 equivalent greenhouse gases than someone who eats no

meat. From a health standpoint, factory farmed animals are fed diets that are historically unfamiliar to them. These diets often contain pesticides and genetically modified foods (not to mention diseased animal parts). These animals are also routinely treated with antibiotics (to prevent them from getting sick on their unnatural diets) and hormones to

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grow faster. Unfortunately for us, what the animal eats or is treated with, we end up also eating.

It has also been estimated that the food industry is responsible for 10 percent of the fossil fuel used in America. Production of junk/processed food is a very inefficient use of energy. An example of this wasted energy is a 12 ounce can of diet soda (one calorie, no nutrition) requires 2200 calories to produce. In addition to the energy required in making processed food, we need to remember that the resultant "food-like" substances are not good for our health: providing chemicals, typically excessive quantities of calories, sodium and trans fatty acids, while containing few nutrients.

A change in eating style requires a shift in perspective and gradual integration of more plant foods and less meat and junk/processed foods. Radical changes are not required, but adjustment over time. An increased reliance on whole foods and mostly plants, can lead to a healthier you and a better planet!

References: Pollan, Michael. 2009. *In Defense of Food: An Eater's Manifesto*, Penguin Publishing; Weber, Karl. 2009. *Food Inc.* Public Affairs Publishing; Foer, Jonathan Safran, 2010. *Eating Animals*. Back Bay Books

Kris is the Dietetic Internship Director & Associate Professor at Cox College. She's a regular volunteer in the Kitchen Garden at the Master Gardener Demonstration Gardens at Nathanael Greene/Close Memorial Park. We're grateful to have her as part of our team!

Sugar Snaps and Strawberries: Simple Solutions for Creating Your Own Small-Space Edible Garden

by Andrea Bellamy, 224 pages
ISBN: 1604691247, Timber Press

Imagine savoring fresh-picked strawberries on a weekend morning, plucking plump figs from your mini-orchard to quarter and serve at a farm-to-table meal with friends, or harvesting and sautéing the edible stalks of garlic bulbs. If the size of your space is bringing you back to reality, here's the best part: you don't need a big backyard to grow your own food. In fact, you don't need a yard at all.

Andrea Bellamy, founder of the acclaimed blog Heavy Petal (HeavyPetal.ca), gives you the dirt on growing gorgeous organic food with very little square footage. Simple, straightforward, design and growing advice can help you transform just a snippet of space into a stylish and edible oasis. Bellamy goes beyond the surface and shows you how to create and maintain healthy soil, decide what and when to plant, sow seeds and harvest, and most importantly, enjoy the process. So go ahead, picture that tiny nook, corner, strip, porch, alley, balcony, or postage-stamp-sized yard overflowing with fingerling potatoes, fragrant herbs, sugar snap peas, French breakfast radishes, and scarlet runner beans.

Armed with luscious photography, encouraging tips, and sophisticated designs, you're sure to be inspired to join the grow-your-own revolution.

Did You Know?

- 1/2 cup of cauliflower only contains 14 calories and no fat! Load up your salad with this vegetable!

- The white, edible portion of cauliflower is called the curd.

Tip 1: To keep cauliflower a bright white, just add a little milk while cooking it!

Tip 2: Cauliflower odor is almost eliminated if you drop a few unshelled walnuts into the pot.

Tip 3: People with thyroid problems should avoid eating this vegetable because it interferes with the body's absorption of iodine.

Tip 4: Cauliflower is high in fiber so this one of the best vegetables to eat to stay full longer!



Mark Your Calendars:

Ready to Garden Series

Midtown Carnegie Library, 397 E Central St, Springfield
Discuss gardening basics with Gina Marie Walden,
Master Gardener of Greene County.

Vegetable Gardening for Beginners

Saturday, January 22 | 1:00 - 2:30 p.m.

To register: 862-0135. Registration starts January 11.

Organic Gardening for Beginners

Saturday, February 19 | 1:00 - 2:30 p.m.

To register: 862-0135. Registration starts February 8.

AGP 343 Vegetable Production Course

Missouri State University | *Taught by Clydette Alsup-Egbers, Associate Professor, Horticulture*

Course description: Methods and practices of home and commercial vegetable production with an emphasis on using environmentally-friendly production and maintenance techniques to maximize yield and quality of vegetables. The purpose of this course is to familiarize students with the basic practices required to successfully produce a wide variety of vegetables.

Class days and times: January 11 - May 10, 2011

Tuesdays and Thursdays 11 a.m. to 12:15 p.m.

Contact: 417-836-5095, clydettealsup@missouristate.edu
School of Ag office, 417-836-5638.

I'd love to have you join us this spring! We'll have lots of wonderful guest speakers, and will have field trips and hands-on opportunities throughout the semester. - Clydette

Beekeepers Association of The Ozarks Beginning Beekeeping Series

Tuesdays | 6:30 - 9 pm | The Library Center

4653 South Campbell, Springfield, Mo, 882-0714

Jan 18, 2011: Bee basics: find out what equipment you need, how to put it together, and how to maintain it.

Jan 25, 2011: Learn all about the bees themselves.

Feb 1, 2011: Find out how to work with bees and how to care for them throughout the year.

Feb 8, 2011: Learn about diseases and problems you may have with your bees and what to do. Find out how to extract your honey, pollen, and wax. We'll even cover how to market your goods.

Food Safety – From Field to Market

Thursday, March 10, 2011 | 1-4 pm

Producing safe food for sale at farmer's markets.

Missouri State University Fruit Experiment Station

Mountain Grove, Mo Faurot Hall 102

To register: 417-547-7533, PMayer@Missouristate.edu

Topics to be covered:

- Importance of Food Safety
- State Regulations for Selling to the public
- Food Safety Concerns in the Field:
 - Field preparation & planting, manure usage & crop cultural guidelines
- Irrigation Methods and Associated Issues
- Harvest and Postharvest Safety
- Food Safety - Field to Market
- GAP- Good Agriculture Practices