

YOU ASKED IT

TIPS FROM THE
RAPID RESPONSE CENTER

Also in December:

- National Handwashing Awareness Week - Dec 4-10
- Pear Month
- Cocoa Day - Dec. 13
- Oatmeal Muffin Day - Dec 19

This holiday season, I hope all of you have a great time with family and friends. As 2010 comes to a close, look forward to 2011 and lots more food and fun from the Rapid Response Center!

Happy Holidays!



Holiday Kitchen 101

So you are hosting a festive holiday meal. The menu planning is done and the groceries are in the kitchen. Dinnertime is looming but the mashed potatoes are sticky and the gravy is lumpy. Help! Here are some tips to de-stress meal preparation.

- **Should roasted turkey rest before serving?**
Yes, about 30 minutes. This helps juices soak back into the meat and keeps it from getting dry.
- **Does basting a turkey help it stay juicy?**
Not really. It essentially runs off the turkey. Plus, the frequent opening and closing of the oven lengthens roasting time.
- **How can I keep the gravy hot?**
Try using an insulated coffee carafe or a fondue pot. The carafe helps prevent drips.
- **Can lumpy gravy be saved?**
When making the gravy, use a whisk to blend in the flour/water thickener. If it still gets lumpy, strain it through a fine-mesh strainer.
- **What equipment is best to mash potatoes?**
Electric mixers will produce gluey potatoes. A hand masher or a ricer may leave a couple lumps. But a food mill makes smooth and silky mashed potatoes that are lump free.

Source: Cook's Illustrated

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Updated School Food Allergy Program

Food allergies in children are increasing more than ever. The Food Allergy & Anaphylaxis Network has just revised their guide to help train and implement school management policies aimed at keeping children safe.

The guide addresses both clinical and practical issues that school nurses see every day. The [Safe@School®](#) presentation gives talking points to help educate everyone in the school at all grade levels.

Another awareness program is [Be a PAL: Protect A Life™ from Food Allergies](#). This helps kids learn how they can help classmates with food allergies. It teaches five easy steps for friends to help prevent contamination from foods that cause allergic reactions.

For more information on these programs and more, see www.foodallergy.org/page/updated-school-food-allergy-program.





Onions
USDA/ARS

Organic Onions and Carrots not Healthier

The debate between nutritional value of organic and conventionally grown produce now has more evidence that organic is not any healthier.

In a study from Denmark, they measured the amount of flavonoids and phenolic acids in organic and conventionally grown onions and carrots. They found no difference in those compounds between the two products.

Flavonoids and phenolic acids are members of the polyphenol group that presumably have health benefits.

Polyphenol content in plants depends on cultivar, pathogen infection, pest infestations, time of harvest, storage conditions, and processing procedures. Other factors include climate, growth conditions, fertilizers, and quality of the soil for nutrient availability.

For more information on this study, see <http://bit.ly/aALYBa>.



Did You Know?

Even diabetics can enjoy a festive meal during the holidays. For tips and ideas on meal planning, see <http://bit.ly/4f29gL>

The Dynamics of Diabetes

Look around a room. Today it is estimated that 1 in 10 people have diabetes. It could be yourself, family, or friends. But think about this. It is estimated with the current growth rate of diabetes, 1 in 5 people will have diabetes by 2050.

The numbers, as sobering as they are, are a picture of reality. As people get older, more diabetes cases will be identified. Minority populations are also growing, some are more apt to become diabetic. On the other hand, loss of life due to diabetes is declining. People who have diabetes are living longer and have better ways to manage diabetes.

These numbers can help health care administrators estimate the cost of health care which could increase considerably. While prevention methods and education can help slow the growth, it most likely will not prevent growth of diabetes.

It is important to continue educating consumers on prevention methods for diabetes. This is especially true for high-risk groups. Physical activity and healthy diets continue to be sound methods to educated diabetics and improve their health.

Source: <http://bit.ly/9rCo6X>
www.diabetes.org/

New USDA Videos on Food Safety

Just in time for the holidays, the USDA Food Safety and Inspection Service have some new videos to help prepare a holiday meal safely. The new videos include:

- Let's Talk about Stuffing a Turkey (also in Spanish)
- Let's Talk About Thawing a Turkey

Others for the holidays:

- "Be Food Safe" for Holiday Buffets
- Eggnog and Food Safety
- Turkey Basics

For more, see

www.youtube.com/user/USDAFoodSafety





What is Jicama?

Jicama (pronounced hee-ca-ma) is quite a popular vegetable in Latin America, Central America, and Mexico. These regions add this vegetable to many of their delicious cuisines because it easily takes on the flavors of the other ingredients. In addition, jicama is great when eaten raw. Raw jicama has a wonderfully light, crisp, and juicy flavor, much like that of an apple or pear. Jicama, when cut into strips or wedges, can make a great addition to a vegetable or fruit platter too!

What does jicama look like?

If you have never seen jicama before, it looks very similar to a potato or turnip with brown, gray, or tan skin and white flesh. It also has a short, stubby root.

Preparation - The good thing is that jicama is so easy to prepare! All you have to do is peel off the skin like a potato, then cut it into slices and eat it raw or toss it in with a casserole or salad. It can also take the place of

water chestnuts because it is similar in texture and mouth feel.

Purchasing - Jicama is available year-round, but its best season is between the months of November and June. Choose jicama that is free of bruises, cuts and discoloration. They should also be firm when gently squeezed, and their root should be dry, not soggy.

Storage - Jicama can be stored in a plastic bag for 2-3 weeks in a cool, dry place - much like you would store potatoes.

Jicama is a low calorie food, only containing approximately 20 calories per half cup. It also contains high amounts of dietary fiber and vitamin C.

Source: <http://bit.ly/bleczZ>



*Jicama and Jicama Relish
Univ. of Georgia*

E. coli Survival in Young Produce

Foodborne illness outbreaks have become prominent in produce in recent years. This puts producers and consumers at risk when consuming uncooked produce. But research at Purdue University found that the time of harvest can reduce the contamination of fresh produce with *E. coli*.

In the study, *E. coli* was added to manure and to water with manure. They found that *E. coli* survives and is active in the ground near the plant roots. Over the growing period, *E. coli* migrates to the surface and can live for many weeks.

On plant surfaces, *E. coli* does not survive past 40 days of the growing period from seed to plant. So after 40

days, the fresh produce will be safer. The caution, however, is bacterial contamination can still occur from other sources.

When young and older plants (after 40 days) are harvested and mixed together, contamination can occur. An example would be bags of mixed greens. Another source of contamination is if plants are uprooted during harvest, bacteria underground can contaminate the area around the plant roots.

Waiting after applying manure 90-120 days from application to harvest, plus waiting 40 days after planting can minimize *E. coli* contamination.

Source: <http://bit.ly/cnyS3Z>



*Produce
USDA/ARS*



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Paid for by Kansas State University

Choosing Beef

The Kansas Beef Council has a new fact sheet from Beefnutrition.org called "Choices of Beef." In this, it discusses grass-fed and natural beef as well as the nutrition and safety of beef. Beef may

be marketed as grain-finished, grass-finished, naturally raised, or certified organic.

Learn more at <http://bit.ly/bf1bsP>.

Cool Cabbage

Cabbage has been cultivated for more than 4,000 years and has been domesticated for over 2,500 years. Though many people connect cabbage to the Irish, the Celts brought cabbage to Europe from Asia around 600 B.C. Early cabbage was not like the full-bodied head grown today, but instead was more of a loose-leaf variety. Northern European farmers developed the head variety in the Middle Ages. French navigator Jacques Cartier brought cabbage to the Americas in 1536.

The botanical name for cabbage is *Brassica oleracea capitata*. The English name cabbage comes from the French word *caboche*, meaning head, referring to its round form. Other vegetables related to the cabbage include Brussel sprouts, cauliflower, broccoli, kale, and kohlrabi.

Cabbage is a hardy vegetable that grows well in fertile soil and takes only three months to grow. There are various shades of green types available as well as red and purple varieties. Green cabbage is grown more often than the red or Savory varieties but red is being used more often for color in salads and cooked dishes. Savory varieties, which are dark green in color, are grown for salads and slaw.

All varieties of cabbage are available all year round. When selecting cabbage for purchase, choose large, compact heads that are heavy for their size. Choose those with tender green leaves showing no signs of damage or insect nibbles.

At home, store the whole head of cabbage in a plastic bag in the refrigerator for up to one week. Fresh cabbage from the garden will last up to two weeks. The older the cabbage gets

though, the stronger the flavor and odor will be. Once the head is cut, the cabbage will lose its freshness so plan to months to grow. There are various shades of green types available as well as red and purple varieties. Green cabbage is grown more often than the red or Savory varieties but red is being used more often for color in salads and cooked dishes. Savory varieties, which are dark green in color, are grown for salads and slaw.

Cabbage is a member of the cruciferous vegetable family and may reduce the risk of some cancers including colorectal cancers. Nutritionally, cabbage is high in beta-carotene, Vitamin C, and fiber.

Unfortunately, some people don't benefit from eating cabbage because they see it as an unpleasant vegetable with a bad odor. However, the cook, not the cabbage should be blamed for this problem. Cabbage contains isothiocyanates that breakdown into smelly sulfur compounds when cooked. The longer the cabbage is cooked, the stronger the smell becomes. Aluminum pans also increase the reaction. The solution to smelly cooked cabbage then is a short cooking time in stainless steel pots and pans. Cook the vegetable, uncovered, in enough water to cover the vegetable. To keep the cooking time brief, boil the water before adding the cabbage and cook just until tender. Another option is to microwave the vegetable. Cut the cabbage in to wedges, sprinkle with water, and cook just until tender. Or to eliminate cooking altogether, enjoy cabbage in a salad like coleslaw.

Source: Iowa State University
Food, Recipe and Activity of the Week, Nov. 7,
2010