



# FAMILY AND CONSUMER SCIENCES

## Newsline



May & June 2007

Choctaw County

## Fruits, vegetables require proper handling

Fruits and vegetables are an important part of a healthy diet. Most supermarkets and grocery stores carry a wide variety of fresh fruits and vegetables that are nutritious, as well as tasty.

However, with the *E. coli* outbreak last year, some consumers may be hesitant to purchase fresh fruits and vegetables.

One of the key aspects in food safety is the proper handling of foods in order to reduce the risk of foodborne illness, said Barbara Brown, Oklahoma State University Cooperative Extension Service food specialist.

“There is a chance that harmful bacteria may be in the soil or water where produce grows and come in contact with fruits and vegetables,” Brown said. “There’s also the possibility of fresh produce becoming contaminated after it is harvest, during food preparation or in storage. Eating contaminated produce can lead to foodborne illness, which can cause serious – and sometimes fatal – infections. However, by following a few simple tips, you can help ensure that you and your family are protected.”

When selecting fresh produce, purchase items that are not bruised or damaged. Be sure to keep fresh fruits and vegetables separate from meat, poultry and seafood. Choose fresh cut produce such as half a watermelon or bagged mixed salad greens that are refrigerated or surrounded by ice. Do not buy pre-washed salads with a lot of brown-edged pieces or if greens are very wet.

Proper storage affects quality and safety. Some fruits and vegetables retain the highest quality when stored at 40° F or below. Produce that is purchased pre-cut or peeled should be refrigerated to maintain quality and safety.

To reduce risk, all produce should be washed, even those that will be peeled before eating. Wash produce under running water just before

eating, cutting or cooking. Scrub firm produce with a clean produce brush. Drying produce with a clean cloth or paper towel may reduce bacteria that may be present.

“Many pre-cut, bagged produced items such as lettuce will indicate on the packaging if they are pre-washed,” she said. “As an extra measure of caution, you can wash the produce again just before you use it. Be sure to use bagged produce before the ‘Best if used by’ date. Raw sprouts may contain bacteria that can cause foodborne illness. Rinsing them is not sufficient. All sprouts should be cooked thoroughly before eating.”

It is important for consumers to keep fruits and vegetables that will be eaten raw separate from other foods such as raw meat, poultry or seafood. Cutting boards, dishes, utensils and countertops should be washed with hot water and soap between the preparation of raw meat products and the preparation of produce that will not be cooked.

“All of the safety tips that have been mentioned also include organically grown produce, since the organic label isn’t a promise that the food is bacteria-free,” Brown said. “A government-approved certifier inspects the farm where the food is grown to make sure the farmer meets the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s organic standard before it receives the ‘organic’ label. These foods should still be handled properly to ensure quality and safety.”

The health benefits of produce still outweigh any food safety risks. Consumers can use selection and handling practices that reduce those risks and be alert for health bulletins and recalls. This is especially important for people in high risk groups.

## Keys to Listening

There is not usually enough time to talk about things between parents and children. We get so busy we don't communicate with our children. We take them to school and pick them up but do not discuss what happened while they were there. Remembering to ask questions about their lives is sometimes hard. Asking questions and listening are great investments in your children. There are many good things that come from your children knowing that you listen and that you are interested in what they say.



- By listening you are telling them they are worth your time, and that they are important enough for you to stop what you are doing.

- When they see that mom or dad find what they say is important, they begin to feel good about themselves. They see that they have value and that they have people who care about them.

- If you listen while your child talks they know they can come to you with something important or worrisome. Talking to you will become a habit if it is a positive experience. If they regularly feel tuned out, those important issues are more likely to go unsaid.

- When your child realizes how much you listen to them they will listen to you. They will realize they like it when they get your full attention; and they will model this when it's their turn to listen.

### Listening takes patience and practice!

Listening to children talk is sometimes hard, because their thoughts are unclear and the process of getting things said is slow. Words may be hard for them to find or fit into sentences.



### Tips & Skills for Listening to your child ...

1. Let children finish their thoughts rather than finish for them. Letting them think and speak in their own way is important in the listening process.

2. Clarify what they are saying and make sure you understand them right. When you are in a conversation, and your child says several things, you could say, "Let me just make sure I'm following you, you are saying that....." or "So you think that..."

3. Hold your opinion during this time; just make sure you are hearing them correctly.

4. Remind yourself not to interrupt your child. Interrupting causes the conversation to get mixed up and your child usually hasn't said all they need to.

5. If your child wants to talk, or needs you to listen, and it is not a good time for you, ask them to give you a couple of minutes. Say "I really want to listen to what you are going to say, so give me three minutes to finish this up and we can talk about what you want" or, negotiate with your child a better time, if needed, and follow through.

Listening is not anything to take lightly. Kids who know they are being heard are kids who will be much more willing to talk. And when kids are willing to talk, they are more likely to talk to YOU about the hidden things they don't tell many others.

## 4-H Summer Day Camps

Youth ages 9 and up  
June, Wednesdays, 9:00 – 12:00  
OSU Extension Office  
Registration Deadline: June 1st  
For more information, call 326-3359.



## Summer Fun for the Family



During the summer months, children have lots of unstructured time and parents or grandparents may have more time with children. Adults can enhance children's development while building a store of great memories by planning fun and stimulating summer activities. Here are a few ideas that don't cost much money. The key ingredient is an adult who is willing to spend **TIME** with children.

**TURN OFF THE TV, VIDEO GAMES, AND COMPUTERS!** The average child spends more than 21 hours each week watching TV. Children need interactions with other people to develop social skills. Summer is a great time to "hang out" in local public parks where children can climb, slide, swim, and swing. All of these physical activities promote coordination and enhanced self-esteem. All the adult has to do is watch and talk about what the child is doing.

**Churn up a freezer of ice cream.** This is an opportunity for a science lesson. What ingredients go into ice cream? How do salt and ice make it freeze? The end result is a cool treat for a hot day. Any food preparation is a science lesson. Most children enjoy helping prepare snacks and meals.

**Go further than food preparation. Go to production!** Get the children into the garden to help see where food really comes from. It is surprising how tasty vegetables become when you grow your own.

**Visit the library often.** Reading is a life long pleasure. Libraries generally have special summer programs. This is a great way to improve skills vital to school (and life) success.

**Use summer events as a way to teach children responsibility.** Have the children plan and lead the games at a family picnic. If you want to teach a few money skills give them a budget for entertainment.

**Have your older children plan dinner one night.** Give them a budget and the responsibility of planning, shopping for, preparing and cleaning up after the meal.

**Have your children teach you something.** This is a great way for grandparents to learn about computers. It is a great self-esteem builder when children are allowed to be the experts!

**You can teach children something you want to pass on** - recipes or a craft like knitting or woodworking.

**Remember what you liked to do when you were a child and do some of those same activities with your own child.** This is a great way to build family traditions that are passed down across generations.

**Take a swimming break.** Go to a local pool or creek. Don't forget the sunscreen!

**Take a tour around your house/neighborhood.** Look for things you may not have noticed before.



**Go for a nature walk.** Besides being good exercise, you can investigate rocks, plants, bugs, etc. Just remember to be careful around the critters—some of them view humans as a threat and will try to protect themselves!

**Make some home made bubbles:**  $\frac{1}{4}$  cup liquid dish detergent, 1 tsp. corn syrup, and  $\frac{1}{2}$  cup of water. You can make bubble wands out of bent wire wrapped with yarn, use a cup with the end cut out, a slotted spoon or a green berry basket.

**Camp out in the back yard!**

Is it raining? **Have a cookie baking day.** (Put some in the freezer to enjoy later or take some and share with the neighbors.)

**Look through photo albums** or organize some into a scrap book.

**Check out your local OSU Cooperative Extension Service** for summer programs for youth and families.

Source: University of Missouri

# Choctaw Co. OHCE



Choctaw County OHCE would like invite you to join the Oklahoma Home and Community Education Program, formerly known as Extension Homemakers or FCE groups.

OHCE is a program for adults and youth, male and female, to help increase their knowledge or skills and to help provide community service.

The purpose of the Oklahoma Home and Community Education (OHCE) is to strengthen individuals, families and communities through education, leadership development and action, in cooperation with affiliated county and local groups. OHCE offers members opportunities for leadership development and participation in community service and program education, leadership and community service.

## LOCAL CLUBS & MEETING SCHEDULES

### BUCKHORN

2<sup>nd</sup> Tuesday of the month  
Contact Person: Anne Page

### BOSWELL

2<sup>nd</sup> Monday of the month  
Contact Person: Mary Duke

### HUGO

3<sup>rd</sup> Monday of the month  
Contact Person: Linda Knight

The Choctaw County OHCE members host a monthly Lunch-n-Learn held the 3<sup>rd</sup> Thursday of each month, 12:00 noon located at the Choctaw Co. OSU Extension Office, Hugo. At each lunch-n-learn an educational program is provided, examples, gardening, family issues, health awareness and food preparation.

### Mark Your Calendar...

OHCE State Conference  
July 8-10  
Oklahoma City

## OHCE Upcoming Events

### Fabulous 50's & Chocolate

Lunch-n-Learn  
May 17<sup>th</sup>, Thursday  
12:00 Noon  
OSU Extension Office, Hugo



### OHCE Executive Meeting

June 21<sup>st</sup>, Thursday  
10:00 am  
OSU Extension Office, Hugo



### Pasta from Scratch

Lunch-n-Learn  
June 21<sup>st</sup>, Thursday  
12:00 Noon  
OSU Extension Office, Hugo



### OHCE members celebrated Oklahoma Centennial at the Boswell Park

Family & Consumer Science Newline is published as one way of communicating educational information to the citizens of Choctaw County:

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