

“Forget the Corn! Pass the Kohlrabi!”



Community garden expands taste buds at Potawot Tribe

By Debbie Leung

Potawot gardeners are: (left to right) Amos Tripp, Venola Dowd, Eunice Bommelyn, Betty Green, Irene Carlson, Laura Kadlecik, Yvonne Bones-Ibarra, Maria Tripp and Craig Benson.

Potawot community members are eating more fruits and vegetables, thanks to a two-acre vegetable garden located in the Potawot Health Village near Arcata, California. The garden is part of a traditional health project of the United Indian Health Services. The project and the garden want to help people return to traditional ways and to return to eating more fresh fruits and vegetables.

Venola Dowd (Resighini Rancheria) and Betty Green (Elk Valley Rancheria) are Elders who help direct the traditional project. They helped create the garden. Both Venola and Betty have diabetes. They know that eating lots of fresh vegetables and fruits, and being physically active, help control their blood sugar levels. When people eat more fresh foods and less fat and sugary foods, they are better able to prevent or delay diabetes. Venola and Betty want their friends and family to have the best of health.



Learning to like new fruits and vegetables

A few years ago Venola and Betty didn't eat many fresh fruits and vegetables. When they started working on the garden project, they learned more about the vitamins and fiber found in fresh produce. The tribe held classes to teach people about different kinds of vegetables.

The women joined the classes and learned they could eat many good tasting things.

The garden grows kale, kohlrabi and spinach. Venola tried them. They were good! Now she says, "I just look at a new kind of vegetable and say, 'That looks good!' and I try it."

Betty was like Venola. "I ate just the basics—tomatoes, potatoes and corn," she says. Because she learned about new vegetables, she is trying different kinds. She is eating spinach and kale. Betty is trying to get her children and grandchildren to eat more vegetables.

She says they are “dragging their heels.” They don’t want to eat new things. But Betty is not giving up. “I want my family to eat more vegetables. It keeps blood sugar down. I want them to stay healthy and not get diabetes,” she says.



A traditional village

Helping people avoid diseases such as diabetes and heart disease was one of the goals when the garden project started. United Indian Health Services bought 40 acres of traditional Wiyot hunting and gathering grounds to be used in a traditional way. The land is sacred. Wiyot villages once stood there. The Potawot River winds through the land.

The Potawot Health Village was built there. The health clinic is part of the village. It was built to look like a traditional Wiyot village. The buildings surround a central courtyard. A waterfall, creek, native trees and bushes, ponds and trails wind through it. Centers for daycare, Elders and

youth will be built in the next few years.

The other 20 acres is named *Ku-wah-dah-wilph* (Comes Back to Life). It is being restored to its natural condition. Two acres are being used for the vegetable garden.

People enjoy walking on the trails by the clinic, in the garden, and throughout *Ku-wah-dah-wilph*. Now, when people come into the health clinic for check-ups, they often go for a walk. You can see clinic staff walking with patients. They walk by the vegetable garden and native plants. It is a good place to think about health of body and spirit.

Garden project is working!

Betty and Venola are proud of the program they created. It is a success! People are eating more fresh fruits and vegetables and being physically active. People volunteer to work in the garden. They plant fruit trees, shovel the earth, plant seeds and pick the fruit and vegetables. They enjoy being physically active, while getting fresh air and

feeling good about growing the food they eat.

Each year about 12,000 pounds of fruits and vegetables are sold! Betty and Venola say the food tastes better than what is sold in stores. The berries are fresh and sweet. The tomatoes are tasty, and the lettuce is crispy fresh.

The produce costs less than at stores. Tribal grants help cover some of the garden’s costs so that the vegetables can be sold at lower prices. For people who cannot pay, the fresh food is free. Elders can call in orders and have them delivered. Mothers eligible for WIC coupons can take home food from the produce stand at no charge.

The garden also supplies food for Indian events and food banks. Venola says, “The good food reaches a lot of Indian people in the community. It’s changing what we eat.”



Tips from Venola

Stay busy, stay young

Venola Dowd (Resighini Rancheria) is 75 years old and says she has always been a busy person. It makes her feel young. She gets up early in the morning. She makes Indian dresses. She also gathers basket making materials. She gives them to basket makers.

She gathers acorns and cans them. It takes a lot of time and physical activity to gather and can acorns! She gives the canned acorns to people in the hospital. Venola says this traditional food helps people feel better.

Gathering food and basket materials helps people be active which helps prevent or control diabetes. Venola says, “Reviving our culture helps us feel good about ourselves.”



Eat well

Changing her diet has helped Venola control her diabetes. No more burgers at the drive-in! Most of her food is baked. She eats a lot of seafood instead of meat. She saw her blood sugar go up after eating fry bread, so now she eats baked fry bread.



Learn more, pass it on

Venola continues to read and go to diabetes education classes to learn more about how to take care of herself. Her advice to her children is to start taking care of their health. She tells them, “Eat healthy food, like vegetables fresh from the garden, and stay away from drugs and drinking.”





Steps for Healthy Food Shopping



- Identify available food sources
- Choose a variety of food
- Choose food in season
- Identify healthy foods in store advertisements/
flyers
- Plan meals for a week
- Use a shopping list
- Shop when you are not hungry





Choosing Good Foods



(See separately packaged visuals.)



(Shopping List - continued)

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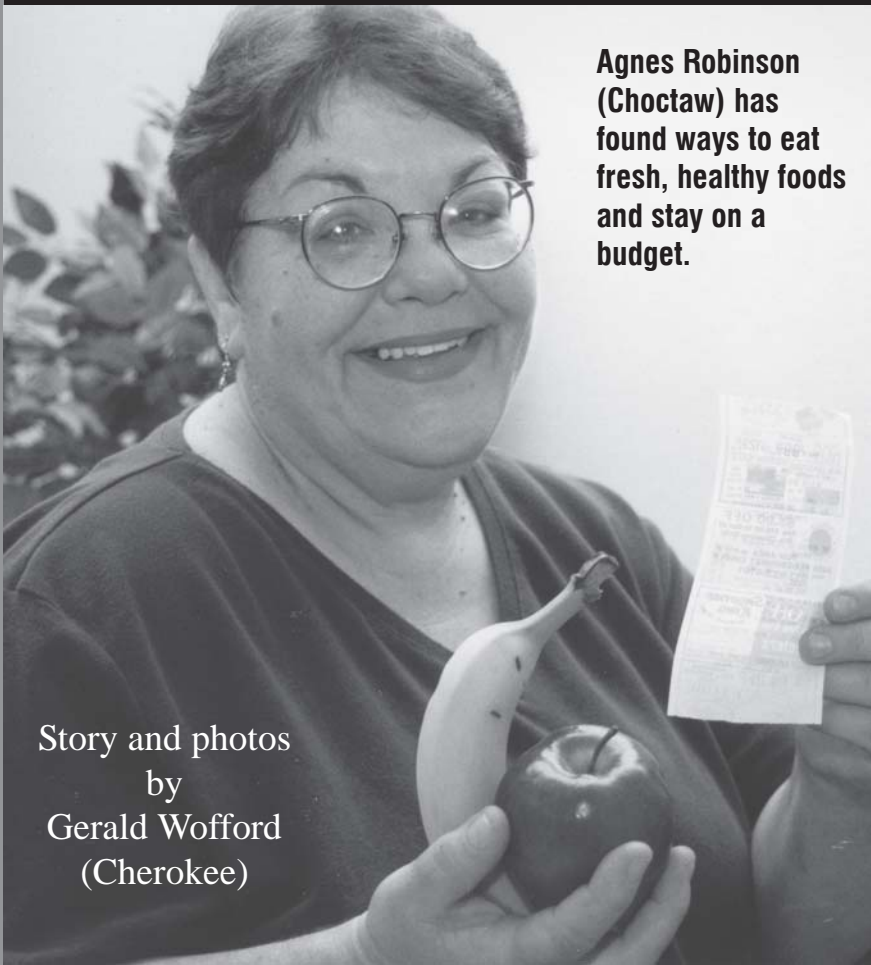


Money Saving Tips



- Think about other food sources**
- Use store advertisements/flyers to plan meals**
- Buy only what is on the shopping list**
- Limit use of ready mixes and instant food**
- Buy store brands and plain labels**
- Buy food in season**





Agnes Robinson (Choctaw) has found ways to eat fresh, healthy foods and stay on a budget.

Story and photos
by
Gerald Wofford
(Cherokee)

You Can Manage Your Budget While You Manage Your Blood Sugar

Making ends meet each month can be a challenge. If you have diabetes and are changing what you eat, choosing foods that stay within your budget can be difficult. With a little help, you can do it. You can choose good low-fat and low-sugar foods and stay within your budget.

Agnes Robinson (Choctaw) manages her budget and her diabetes. She has learned ways to choose the right foods, and not spend extra money.

It wasn't easy at first. Agnes found out she had diabetes, and learned she needed to eat different foods. She found out that eating lean meats, like turkey, and lots of fresh produce would help her.

At first, she thought this would mean spending more money. She checked items at the grocery store. "I was surprised! Some seemed expensive. I couldn't understand how some foods that are good for you can be so expensive! Yet a huge bag of potato chips, soda pop, and snack cakes can be so much cheaper," she recalls.

Agnes worked with the staff at the Urban Inter-tribal Center of Texas. She learned ways to manage her food budget and buy items that kept her blood sugar in control. "I've become the local 'consumer queen' in the Ft. Worth, Texas, area!" she laughs.

Be aware of prices

Agnes has always been careful to watch her budget. "I will stop at nothing to find the best deals and prices on food!" she says. So, when she is shopping, she always checks the price before she puts the item in her cart.

Many people with diabetes learn that eating fish for protein is better than eating something like steak. Agnes was like many. She thought buying fish would cost much more money than buying beef. She checked around for prices, and found that canned fish sold at a dollar store doesn't cost that much. "I can usually buy cans of salmon for at least 50 to 75 cents less than at grocery stores!" she says. "I know eating fish is good for me. Now I know I can afford it."

Same price, better for you

Agnes has also found that replacing beef with turkey or chicken doesn't cost more money. "Turkey is so much better for you than heavy beef," says Agnes. "I make turkey burgers. If you bake or broil chicken, you don't have all that fat." She can do this without spending more money.

Fresh over canned

Agnes chooses fresh food instead of canned or prepared food. She finds that they cost less, are tastier, and are healthier. "It's more natural. There is no extra salt or sugar. That helps me control my blood sugar."

By eating more fresh foods, Agnes has lost her taste for salt filled foods. "I don't like having all that salt on my food," she says. "I look at the labels of canned vegetables and am astonished just how much salt can be in one can of green beans. An average can of green beans, or can of mixed vegetables, can sometimes contain as much as 360 milligrams of salt. That's just one can! That's way too much salt!"

Buy when things are cheap, then freeze

Agnes says she has become not only the "consumer queen," but the "storing queen" as well. Agnes buys items like fresh green beans when they are in season. She buys a lot. She picks the green beans, and removes the tips and unwanted strings.

Then she chooses exactly how much she wants to eat that day. She wraps the rest in plastic

and freezes it. Agnes says that having green beans in the freezer makes her more likely to eat them.

If she did not have beans, she might choose something like white bread as a side dish. The green beans serve as a side dish for main courses such as broiled chicken or lean turkey.

Agnes doesn't mind that storing food takes time. "Picking the beans, cleaning the beans, and cooking and freezing them can take much longer than just reaching for the closest can opener and pouring out a can of vegetables. But saving money and eating fresh food is worth the time!"

Try beans in a crock-pot

Agnes says a crock-pot helps her save money and time. "With a crock-pot you can add your vegetables and your seasoning, set it on low and then do other things you need to do."

Agnes cooks pinto beans the good, old-fashioned way. She buys bags of dried beans instead of cans. Dried beans are much cheaper and full of fiber. "I choose just exactly how much I need to make." If Agnes has friends over, she makes more. She feels that when friends or family are over for dinner, she is helping them to eat just a little better too.

Spice instead of sauces

Agnes doesn't buy cans of cream sauce, or pre-made meals, which can be expensive. Instead, she spices up her meals with lemon pepper, or sometimes fresh, diced garlic. The spices make the food a little tastier without the fat and without the extra expense.

Connection to culture

Agnes says becoming connected to her tribal heritage is a good reason to choose fresh over canned foods. "Our ancestors grew their own food and took the time and effort to feed their families right," she says. "They didn't add ingredients that were bad for them. I try to do the same thing."

By preparing food in a traditional way, Agnes gets exercise. "I can store and freeze as much as two pounds of fresh vegetables a day. That takes a lot of sweat," laughs Agnes. Spending time to prepare fresh foods gives Agnes more time to think about her ancestors.

Likes the challenge of saving money

Agnes looks at every possible way to not only save money while shopping, but to choose healthy food. "Each trip to the supermarket is a challenge for me," Agnes says. "I am like other people who are trying to save money. But for me it is a little bit different because I have diabetes. I'm not just looking for the cheapest price I can get. I really have to look for the food that is really going to be good for me. The possibilities can be endless if you know what to look for."





Changes I Can Make



I am:

- Thinking about it
- Ready to start
- Doing it now
- Doing it for 6 months

My long-term goal is:

My short-term goal is: (Be specific about what, when, how and where)

I will ask (Who?) _____ for support by helping me in this way:
(Be specific about what they can do to help you)

I will check regularly to see if I reach my goal by:

When I reach my short-term goal my reward will be:

Signature

Date

