

July 2008

Dear Colleagues,

Greetings and welcome to the mid-summer issue of *It's All About Balance: Eat Smart, Play Hard, Rest Well*. As Montana moves into the best season to enjoy the last best place, we share smart tips on how to **Take a Hike**, along with delicious strategies to **Keep Fruits and Veggies Fresh** after you have visited a local farmers' market. Our nutrient-rich recipe-of-the-month is all about **Summer Salad Fun**, while the media release focuses on family outdoor activities with hot tips on how to enjoy summer hiking in Big Sky country.

With the convergence of several mega-trends (environment, energy, etc.), local foods are one of the hottest nutrition issues of 2008. Their popularity promises to increase along with concerns about global warming, gas prices, and the safety of our food supply. While being a complete *locavore* (word-of-the-year in 2007) is tough in places like Montana, it's a snap to meet to the local food "challenge" (10 percent of your food grown locally) during our Farmers' Market season. The following online resources may be useful in your efforts to help Montanans reduce the number of food miles involved in their daily meals:

<http://agr.mt.gov/farmersmarkets/farmersMkts08.pdf>

This 11-page brochure from the Montana Department of Agriculture lists the **WHEN**, **WHERE**, and **CONTACT DETAILS** for farmers' markets from Big Timber to Wolf Point.

<http://www.localharvest.org/>

This comprehensive site has an extensive national, searchable database of local farms and markets, as well as a very up-to-date compilation of sustainable food and farming news.

<http://lancaster.unl.edu/food/farmar.shtml>

Nebraska Extension offers a *Garden Grocery: Food Safety and Selection at the Farmers' Market* PowerPoint presentation and handouts, plus related links to more produce info.

We welcome your comments and suggestions about **Healthy Families 2008**. Just send your thoughts along to me at [EatRightMT2000@gmail.com](mailto:EatRightMT2000@gmail.com) - and remember: Past issues of **Healthy Families** and other ERM materials are available at [www.eatrightmontana.org/](http://www.eatrightmontana.org/) (check out our 2006 archives - all about how to eat local, play local, and live healthy).

*Dayle Hayes, MS, RD*

**Healthy Families** packets are made possible with generous support from agencies, organizations, and individuals. Please join us in thanking the 2008 sponsors listed on the right. If you use this packet and can make a donation to support positive, practical messages for families, please contact ERM Chair Katie Bark at 406-994-5641 or [kbark@mt.gov](mailto:kbark@mt.gov)

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**It's All About Balance** | Celebrating Healthy Families 2008

## 4 Smart Ways to Take a Hike

Walking through beautiful surroundings is good for the body, mind, and spirit. Taking a hike in any of Montana's fifty-six counties is a wonderful way to get the physical activity your body needs, along with the connection to nature that all humans seem to crave. Getting kids into the hiking habit early can help to prepare them for many of life's challenges - both physical and mental. To avoid the agony of constant "are-we-there-yet" questions, keep children occupied with learning to observe their natural environment - by taking photographs or identifying plants, animals, insects, and/or birds. The secret to fun family hikes is plenty of well-timed breaks for rest, fluids, and food.

### Walk smart with the right shoes and socks.

Happy feet are essential for happy hiking, especially for children. If you want children to grow up with a love of hiking, they need well-fitting shoes and breathable socks. Sturdy sneakers (with firm soles) may be fine for in-town walks and shorter hikes. However, boots or trail shoes with good ankle support are essential for longer hikes or rough paths. To avoid painful problems on a hike, try out shoes or boots (especially new ones) around the house before you hit the trail.

### Be sun smart with lotions, clothes, hats, and glasses.

Smart sun protection is all about layers. The first layer is a broad-spectrum sunscreen with an SPF of 15 or higher. Cover all skin that may be exposed with plenty of sunscreen (reapply every 2 hours and after swimming). The next layer is loose-fitting clothing over as much of your body as is comfortable. The final is a wide brimmed hat and sunglasses that block 99-100% of UVA/UVB rays (check label). For more on sun-wise habits, visit [www.epa.gov/sunwise/kids.html](http://www.epa.gov/sunwise/kids.html)

### Enjoy plenty of smart beverages.

Staying hydrated is one of the keys to enjoying any physical activity. Getting enough to drink will help your endurance and maintain a positive attitude. Refreshing water - brought from home or safely filtered from a stream - is your smartest bet. Sports drinks or powdered lemonade may be nice for those who won't drink enough plain water. A good rule of thumb is 1 quart every 2 hours for adults - more if you are in extreme hot, cold, or dry weather, or at higher altitudes.

### Bring along smart trail foods.

Eating right on the trail means having plenty of easy-to-eat, high-energy snacks to carry your body throughout the hike. Make sure that your trail treats are foods that travel well and that your hikers really enjoy. Eating too little can lead to dizziness, nausea, and cramps. Some favorite food tips from veteran hikers: **tuna** (pop-top cans or pouches) on bagels or crackers; **cheese** (hard cheddar or string) with whole wheat crackers; **nuts** and dried fruit; and **beef jerky**.

**LOOKING FOR FUN HIKES IN MONTANA?** Big Sky country's official travel site lists hikes by region and city at [www.visitmt.com/tripplanner/thingstodo/hiking.htm](http://www.visitmt.com/tripplanner/thingstodo/hiking.htm). The site offers detailed descriptions and printable maps of selected hikes. It also describes ten essential survival items, so you'll have what you need in tough outdoor situations. As the Scouts' motto reminds us, the best way to have a great hiking experience is to always **be prepared** for the worst.

**Real Montana. Real Close. Real Fun.**

## Delicious Ways to Keep Fruits and Veggies Fresh

Farmers' markets are the ideal place to buy produce. The fruits and veggies are likely to be at peak freshness - and you can support local farmers and ranchers with your purchases. Wherever you buy produce, you can protect your investment - and keep food safe for your family - by following a few important strategies. (1) Reduce food waste by buying only as much as you can eat (or prepare) until your next shopping trip. (2) Take food from market to home as quickly as possible. (3) Wash produce with clean hands when you are ready to eat it, NOT when you bring it home. (4) Refrigerate all cut-up fruit or veggies (fresh or cooked) within two hours. And, remember, different fruits and vegetables require different temperature and humidity levels for optimal shelf life and food safety.

### Keep fruits and vegetables fresh on your counter tops.

Many fruits do best when they are ripened on the counter, then refrigerated once fully ripe. Items in this category include melons, peaches, plums, and nectarines, as well as avocados and tomatoes (which are fruit in the botanical sense). It also works for more tropical fruits, such as bananas, papayas, and mangoes. Do not leave fruit in plastic bags on counters. This can slow the ripening process and may lead to rotten spots; paper bags allow better airflow and are fine for most fruits.

### Keep fruits and vegetables fresh in your refrigerator.

Most other fresh fruits/veggies are best stored in a clean refrigerator at 40 degrees F or below - in plastic bags with holes to allow for air flow. Use crisper drawers for whole produce, storing fruits separately from vegetables. Fruits give off a gas that can shorten the storage life of other items, while vegetables (like broccoli) give off odors that can affect the taste and quality of fruits. To avoid cross contamination, be sure to keep meat, poultry, and fish separate from produce items.

### Keep fruits and vegetables fresh in your cupboards.

Some produce items are best stored in a clean, dry, well-ventilated space with no direct light - like in a cupboard. Included in this category are potatoes, sweet potatoes, yams, and winter squash (acorn, butternut, Hubbard, etc.), as well as garlic and onions. When storing canned products in cupboards, use the **FIFO** rule: **First In, First Out**. Writing the month and year of purchase on top of the can or jar makes it easy to decide which products to use before others.

### Keep fruits and vegetables fresh in the freezer.

You can keep extra summer fruits and veggies in your freezer (where the **FIFO** rule also applies) with a little help from your MSU Extension friends. Two publications available online will help you make all the right freezing decisions: one for fruits at <http://msuextension.org/publications/HomeHealthandFamily/MT198330HR.pdf> and another for vegetables at <http://msuextension.org/publications/HomeHealthandFamily/MT198331HR.pdf>.

**Want more information about the best way to store specific fruits and veggies?** The produce database at [www.fruitsandveggiesmorematters.org/?page\\_id=164](http://www.fruitsandveggiesmorematters.org/?page_id=164) allows you to search for detailed information on choosing and storing a long list of delicious produce choices. On the same site, you can also find recipes, nutrition information, and other helpful tips on increasing your family's intake of nature's fast food - fruits and vegetables.

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**MT Department of Public Health & Human Services**

July 1, 2008

## Summer Hikes for Lots of Fun (and Serious Fitness Too)

As gas prices rise and concerns about the environment grow, many families are looking for vacations that are both less expensive and more natural. Taking a hike can be a fun - and very inexpensive - way to give your family quality time with each other and with nature at the same time. (And, don't tell the kids, but hiking is also a fabulous way to get everyone off the couch and into good shape while enjoying the great outdoors.)

"Montanans are really fortunate when it comes to hiking opportunities," says Thomas Baumeister, Education Bureau Chief, Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks (FWP) in Helena. "Our families can enjoy thousands of trail miles - right outside their front door or just a few minutes away in many cases. Taking a hike on a lovely summer day really is a very special opportunity - for family members to connect and to discover the natural wonder all around them."

In addition to the trails in local, state, and national parks, Montana's Wildlife Management Areas (WMA) offer abundant opportunities for hiking. The primary focus of WMAs is to provide vital habitat for elk, deer, ducks, geese, pheasants, grouse, and other wildlife. Many also allow for public recreational pursuits during the summer months. The FWP has a searchable database of WMA locations and recommended activities at <http://fwp.mt.gov/lands/searchwmas.aspx>

Baumeister sees hiking as a powerful activity. "It's very different than many other things that we do with our kids, like watching them play ball or driving them to dance. On a hike, adults and kids are doing the same thing at the same time. In our hectic world, taking a hike cuts down on the background noise and allows us to really talk - and listen - to each other." Here are a few of his thoughts on how to make family hikes successful adventures rather than intense ordeals:

- **Take advantage of expert advice:** If you are unfamiliar with an area, take a friend or family member who has been that way before. Go with a hiking club or talk to folks at the outdoor store, so you can be properly prepared for any risks.
- **Choose the right distance:** With young folks, it's not the distance you go, it's what you do along the way. Start with short, easy hikes and gradually move up to more adventurous ones, as everyone gets stronger and more confident.
- **Make it fun:** Children love to explore new areas - and to discover the details of seemingly unimportant rocks and pieces of wood. Let your child take the lead and take as much time as they need to smell the flowers or splash in the creek.
- **Take plenty of treats:** Hiking is hard work, especially when you have short legs! Bring plenty of water and snack choices, like string cheese, granola bars, and trail mix (nuts, sunflower seeds, dried fruit, cereal pieces, and chocolate bits).

"Taking a hike is a welcome excuse to get away from our stressful, over-scheduled lives," says Baumeister. "Probably the best, but often difficult, thing for adults is to let children set the pace for a hike. At a child's pace, you can observe the world in the same way that they do and see things that you might have otherwise missed. With a little attention and creativity, each person can have some time to enjoy and to share the inspiring natural world with the rest of the family."

Past and current issues of Eat Right Montana's monthly packets can be downloaded for free at  
[www.eatrightmontana.org/eatrightthehealthyfamilies.htm](http://www.eatrightmontana.org/eatrightthehealthyfamilies.htm)



## Super Summer SALAD FUN !!

Grocery store bins and farmers' market stands are bursting with fresh fruits and vegetables at this time of year. It's the perfect time to be creative, mix it up, and re-invent the summer salad!

Here is the 'backbone' for summer salad fun. Mix and match the ingredients to make a crunchy, healthful combination all your own. Try these as a side salad or as an entrée with whole grain bread or crackers.

### Directions

- 1) Wash and chop (or tear) leafy greens.
- 2) Add chopped fruit or vegetables; cooked grains; beans, nuts, or seeds; or pieces of lean meat, fish, poultry, or tofu.
- 3) Toss with your favorite low-fat vinaigrette or dressing and serve on individual plates.
- 4) Top with crumbled or grated cheese.
- 5) Sprinkle with a teaspoon or two of freshly chopped summer herbs - parsley, basil, mint, thyme, or cilantro.

### Salad with Sass (for 4)

- 6 cups leafy greens (Red leaf, romaine, Swiss chard, endive and/or arugula)
- 1 pear, cut/cubed or sliced very thin
- 4 strawberries, sliced
- 1 celery stalk, chopped
- 1 tablespoon sunflower seeds
- 1 tablespoon raisins or dried cherries
- ½ ripe avocado, peeled and cut
- Crumbled blue cheese
- Chopped fresh parsley

### Super Salad Combos

Here are a few salad ideas - just to get your taste buds excited about all the deliciously healthful possibilities!

#### Montana Made:

Wild rice, grilled trout, olive oil, and lightly drizzled honey.

#### All American:

Chopped tomatoes, cucumbers, and carrots, with grated cheddar cheese and low-fat ranch dressing.

#### Go Greek:

Black olives, sun dried tomatoes, chopped tomatoes and cucumbers, feta cheese, with oil and vinegar.

#### Taco Time:

Cooked corn, black beans, crushed tortilla chips, jalapeños, low-fat ranch dressing, and salsa.

#### Un-Beet-able!

Fresh beets (cooked, peeled, and cut), feta or blue cheese, and walnuts with low-fat vinaigrette.

#### California Dreamin':

Sliced chicken breast, mandarin orange segments, chopped avocado, sliced almonds, raisins, and low-fat French or Italian dressing.

#### Fruitfully Fun:

Strawberries, grapes, walnuts, and a poppy seed dressing.

#### Good to the Root:

Red potatoes (boiled, cooled, and cut), celery, carrots, dill, and coleslaw dressing.

#### Christmas in July:

Red and green peppers, broccoli florets, and radishes with low-fat ranch dressing.