

Column Name - The Heartland Minute

By: Ben Sims

K-State Research and Extension Greenwood County

Agriculture Extension Agent

*“Improving Our Summer Eating Habits”*

Well Summer is upon us; along with grilling season, long and busy days, ball games, 4-H events, lake days, and various other extracurricular activities. Moral of the story? We are all busy and sometimes it can be hard to find the time to sit down and share a meal with family, let alone a balanced one. Sometimes it is just easier to grab that bag of chips from the pantry, or that donut off the counter. However, there are some steps we can take to make those healthy eating choices and habits a little easier.

The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and other organizations have reported that barely 10% of Americans regularly meet the daily recommendation for eight servings of fruits and vegetables. Kansans fall in the middle of that range. Only 10% of residents eat enough fruit daily, and just 8% get enough vegetables. To give you a guideline to go off of, the USDA defines a serving as a full cup of raw vegetables or fruit; or a half-cup of cooked vegetables.

The best way to get in the habit of consuming more fruits and vegetables is to make it easy, convenient and really fast to get to. If you can make it habit then it will be easier over time. One trick to establish that habit is to keep a bowl of fresh fruit out so that you can see it when you walk into the kitchen. If you're hungry for a snack, then you are more likely to grab that instead of looking into the cabinet for something a little less nutritious.

You can also make eating fruits and vegetables more fun for the family by creating skewers with fun fruit shapes including watermelon, grapes, blueberries, kiwi, cantaloupe or even grape tomatoes. It might be hard as an adult to make sure we are getting our daily serving in, but as many of you know, kids are always watching us. So, if we make it a point to choose those fruits and veggies first then we are serving as role models for making the healthier choice.

Another option for getting those veggies in the diet is to grill them. Decide on your vegetable selection, and mix in some herbs and seasonings creating a delicious side dish. If you end up with extra fruits and vegetables that you have problems getting in to a meal then you can always can or freeze them for later use. Now get out there and enjoy that health living!

Information comes from K-State Research and Extension Northwest Area Family and Consumer Science specialist, Ashley Svaty.

For more information regarding Agriculture and Natural Resources, 4-H Youth Development, or K-State Research and Extension call the office at 620-583-7455, email me, Ben Sims, at benjam63@ksu.edu, or stop by the office which is located inside the courthouse. Be sure to follow K-State Research and Extension- Greenwood County on Facebook for the most up-to-date information on Extension education programs and the Greenwood County 4-H program.