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## GARDENING IN YOUR NEIGHBORHOOD

# Eat a Rainbow: Colorful, Seasonal Fruits and Veggies

*Time: 70 Minutes*

Make life more colorful with fruits and vegetables. Eat healthier one plate at a time by adding a little color to every meal and snack. Learn tips on how to eat with the seasons and how to incorporate more produce into your diet.

## OBJECTIVES:

Explain why eating a rainbow of produce is important.

Learn tips on how to eat seasonally.

Try new colorful produce.

## SETUP

- Review resource list and print it out. Purchase all necessary supplies after reviewing the [HFL Cost Calculator](#).
- Set up stations for participants with the necessary activity supplies.
- Provide computer, internet access, and projector, if available.

## INTRO (10 Minutes)

- Welcome participants and introduce yourself.
- Take care of any housekeeping items (closest bathroom, water fountain, etc.).
- Give a brief description of the educational experience.
- Engage in an icebreaker to gauge topic knowledge from the bank of options provided in the [Welcome Toolkit](#).

## DEMO (10 Minutes)

- Demonstrate content (see demo script).

## ACTIVITY (20 Minutes)

- Play the recipe video.
- Participants will taste the rainbow after preparing a colorful heart-healthy dish.

## RECAP (10 Minutes)

- Pass out handout(s) and invite participants to taste their healthy dish while going through the handout(s) together.

## GOAL SETTING/CLOSING (20 Minutes)

- Engage in a goal setting activity from the bank of options provided in the [Welcome Toolkit](#). Pass out the Setting SMART Goals handout to participants.
- Thank participants and encourage them to join the next activity. (Provide date/time/location if known.)



NOTES: Read legal liability disclaimer before activity: [Food Liability Disclaimer](#). Refer to Resource List for all necessary supplies and handouts. This Healthy for Life® Educational Experience was created by Aramark and the American Heart Association as part of our Healthy for Life® 20 By 20 Initiative. We are proud to be working together to help improve the health of all Americans.

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# Eat a Rainbow Resource List

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## HANDOUTS/VIDEOS

Find these resources on AHA's YouTube channel or [heart.org/healthyforgood](http://heart.org/healthyforgood)

- Video - [Simple Persian Salad](#)
- Infographic - [Seasons of Eating](#)
- Infographic - [Five Reasons to Add Color](#)
- Infographic - [Eat More Color](#)

Find these resources in this lesson

- Recipe - [Simple Persian Salad](#)
- Handout - [Seasons of Eating](#)
- Handout - [Five Reasons to Add Color](#)
- Handout - [Eat More Color](#)
- Handout - [Setting SMART Goals](#)

## SPACE SETUP

- Chairs and tables for participants
- Demo table
- Pens for participants
- Folders
- Computer, internet access and projector, if available

## DEMO SUPPLIES

Purchase the demo supplies only if in season and/or they're low-cost. Please reference the [Eat More Color](#) handout for more color-specific produce ideas!

- 1 melon
- 1 corn on the cob
- 1 beet or carrot with leafy top
- Red/pink produce – beets, cherries, red apples
- Blue/purple produce – blueberries, eggplants, red onions
- Yellow/orange produce – corn, carrots, pineapples
- White/brown produce – bananas, brown pears, cauliflower
- Green produce – avocados, okra, peas

## ACTIVITY INGREDIENTS\* AND SUPPLIES\*\*

- 2 medium cucumbers
- 4 medium tomatoes
- 1 medium red onion
- 2 tablespoon fat-free feta cheese, crumbled
- ¼ cup chopped fresh mint or parsley  
**or** 1 tablespoon dried mint or parsley, crumbled
- 2 fresh limes
- 1 tablespoon extra-virgin olive oil
- ½ teaspoon black pepper
- Chef's knife
- Cutting board
- Small bowl
- Large bowl
- Measuring cups and spoons
- Plates (for tasting)
- Forks (for tasting)

\*Recipe serves 4 people; please multiply ingredients as necessary for your participants.

\*\*Purchase appropriate number of supplies for your participants. Participants can divide into teams and share supplies and ingredients.



**SAY:**

We need to eat a variety of fruits and veggies, but why are these colorful, nutritious, and delicious foods so important?



Here are five reasons to add color:



1. **Full of the good.** Fruits and vegetables provide many beneficial nutrients, including vitamins, minerals, healthy fats, protein, calcium, fiber and antioxidants. Add fruits and veggies to meals and snacks for a nutritional power boost.



2. **Free of the bad.** Fruits and vegetables typically contain no trans fat, low saturated fat, and very little or no sodium. The natural sugars they contain don't affect your health the same way added sugars do, especially if you eat the whole fruit or vegetable and not just drink the juice.



3. **Won't weigh you down.** Fruits and vegetables tend to be low in calories, so they can help you manage your weight while still filling you up, thanks to the fiber and water they contain. Replacing higher-calorie foods with fruits and vegetables is an easy first step to a healthier eating plan.



4. **Super flexible superfoods.** All forms of fruits and vegetables—fresh, frozen, canned, dried, and 100% juice—can be part of a healthy diet. They can be eaten raw or cooked, whole or chopped, organic or not, and alone or in combination with other foods. They are among the most versatile, convenient, and affordable foods you can eat.



5. **A whole-body health boost.** A healthy eating plan rich in fruits and vegetables can help lower your risk of many serious and chronic health conditions, including heart disease, stroke, obesity, high blood pressure, high blood cholesterol, diabetes, kidney disease, osteoporosis, and some types of cancer. They're also essential to many daily functions of a healthy body.



**SAY:**

**Which fruits and vegetables are best?**



That's easy: They're all good! If you eat many different types of fruits and veggies, you're sure to get all the different types of nutrients you need. The American Heart Association recommends filling at least half your plate with fruits and veggies in order to consume the recommended 4½ cups of each per day. The good news is that all produce counts, which means canned, fresh, and frozen varieties can all help you reach your goal.



When buying canned, dried, or frozen vegetables and fruit, be sure to compare food labels and choose the products with the lowest amount of sodium and added sugars.



While grocery stores will carry an assortment of fruits and vegetables throughout the year, buying fresh seasonal produce can ease some of the strain on your wallet. When foods are in season locally, they are usually more abundant and affordable.



Buying seasonal produce may also add zest and flavor to your meals. Fruits and vegetables that are in season are typically fresher and more flavorful. You can also freeze them to add to smoothies, soups, and breads. Gardening is a great way to get fresh seasonal produce from your own backyard while getting a little exercise, too!



During the spring months, look for produce like peas, radishes, and green onions. For summer, opt for berries, corn, tomatoes, or melons. While in fall, choose apples, pears, or sweet potatoes. And in the winter, try celery, citrus fruits, or root veggies (like beets or turnips!).

*Continued on page 4*

## Eat a Rainbow Demo Script (Continued)



**SAY:**

Here are some tips on choosing fresh seasonal produce while shopping:

**Demonstrate with a melon for the next part (if in season).**



**SAY:**

If you're looking at buying cantaloupes during the summer, make sure the stem is gone, and the shape is symmetrical, or evenly round. Second, the netting (or skin of the melon) should be thick and feel fairly coarse, almost like corkboard. The last thing to look for is the color. The color of the cantaloupe between the netting should be pale yellow. If the melon looks green, it isn't quite ripe yet.

**Demonstrate with corn on the cob for the next part (if in season).**



**SAY:**

Another item that's at the peak of its freshness in summer is corn on the cob. To find the ears of corn that were picked most recently, do not peel back the husk since that damages the ear for the next shopper. Instead look at the brown corn silk on the end of the ear. If it still looks lush and fresh, then the corn has probably just been picked and will be sweet and juicy.

**Hold up either beets or carrots (or both) with leafy tops during the next section.**



**SAY:**

Now let's take a look at some of the root vegetables. Beets, which are freshest in the winter months, are usually found with their leaves on at the farmer's market and sometimes in the supermarket. The same goes for carrots. If the green tops aren't wilted, then they are probably fresh. After you purchase the veggies, make sure to remove the tops right away. But don't toss the tops as you can cook beet greens by simmering them in low-sodium chicken broth until they're tender. Chopped carrot

tops are delicious when they're sprinkled in salads or blended into a pesto with basil. One last tip, the "heavy for its size" freshness rule applies to fruit you find in the supermarket throughout the year. When judging which tomatoes, pineapples, pomegranates, or even grapes are the best, pick the ones that are heavy for their size. The theory is that they have the most water in them and are the juiciest fruits available.

**Hold up the fruit or vegetable that corresponds to each color group when talking through the next part.**



**SAY:**

Add color to your plate each day with the five main color groups:

- Red and pink
- Blue and purple
- Yellow and orange
- White and brown
- Green

## Eat a Rainbow Activity Script

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Divide participants into teams to practice making an easy and nutritious salad using the vibrant colors purple, green, and red!

Play the recipe video.

Invite group members to pick up their resources (recipe, ingredients, and cooking supplies) at the demo station. (Alternatively, if you have set everything up at their stations beforehand, participants can go straight to their cooking stations.)



**SAY:**

Today, we are going to make a Simple Persian Salad. Persia is the former name for the country Iran. In Iran and throughout the Middle East, ingredients like cucumbers, onions, herbs, citrus fruit, and vegetable oils are all food staples. We'll be using all those heart-healthy ingredients in our salad today. Let's get started.



Once everyone has finished making the dish, divide it onto plates and share with your team.

## Simple Persian Salad

Makes 4 servings; 1 cup per serving  
Per serving: 88 Calories; 0.5 g Saturated Fat; 86 mg Sodium



Serve this tasty Middle Eastern salad featuring cucumbers, onion, mint, feta cheese, and citrus juice.

### INGREDIENTS

- 2 medium cucumbers, seeded and diced
- 4 medium tomatoes, diced
- 1 medium red onion, diced
- ¼ cup chopped fresh mint or parsley  
or 1 tablespoon dried mint or parsley, crumbled
- 2 tablespoons fat-free feta cheese, crumbled
- Juice from 2 fresh limes
- 1 tablespoon extra-virgin olive oil
- ½ teaspoon black pepper

### DIRECTIONS

1. In a large bowl, stir together the cucumbers, tomatoes, onion, mint, and feta. Cover and refrigerate for 20 minutes.
2. In a small bowl, whisk together the lime juice, oil, and pepper until well blended.
3. Pour the dressing over the cucumber mixture, tossing to coat. Serve immediately.

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# SEASONS *OF EATING*

Your heart-healthy recipes will taste even better with seasonal produce.

## SPRING

artichokes, asparagus, carrots, chives, fava beans, green onions, leeks, lettuce, parsnips, peas, radishes, rhubarb and Swiss chard



## SUMMER

berries, corn, cucumbers, eggplant, figs, garlic, grapes, green beans, melons, peppers (sweet and hot), stone fruit (apricots, cherries, nectarines, peaches, plums), summer squash, tomatoes and zucchini



## FALL

apples, brussels sprouts, dates, hard squash (acorn, butternut, spaghetti), pears, pumpkins and sweet potatoes



## WINTER

bok choy, broccoli, cauliflower, celery, citrus fruit (clementines, oranges, tangerines), collard greens, endive, leafy greens (collards, kale, mustard greens, spinach) and root vegetables (beets, turnips)



### KEEP THESE TIPS IN MIND WHEN USING AND SHOPPING FOR SEASONAL PRODUCE:

- 1** Fresh foods are often less expensive during their harvest season. You may even save money by buying in bulk.
- 2** Shop the farmers' market to learn more about produce and get ideas on how to prepare foods in season.
- 3** Gardening gives you fresh seasonal produce and a little exercise, too. The sense of accomplishment you'll feel will make that produce taste even better!
- 4** Frozen, canned and dried fruits and vegetables also can be healthy choices. Compare food labels and choose items with the lowest amounts of sodium and added sugars.
- 5** Choose canned fruit packed in water, its own juice or light syrup (avoid heavy syrup).
- 6** Choose canned and frozen vegetables without sauces that can be high in sodium and saturated fat.
- 7** Freeze fresh produce at the peak of its season, so you can add it to smoothies, soups and breads and enjoy it throughout the year.

REASONS TO



ADD COLOR

Turns out mom was right. We need to eat our fruits and veggies. But why are these colorful, nutritious and delicious foods so important?

# 1. FULL OF THE GOOD



Fruits and vegetables provide many beneficial nutrients, including vitamins, minerals, healthy fats, protein, calcium, fiber, antioxidants and phytonutrients. Add fruits and veggies to meals and snacks for a nutritional power boost.

# 2. FREE OF THE BAD



Fruits and vegetables typically contain no trans fat, low saturated fat and very little or no sodium. The natural sugars they contain don't affect your health the same way added sugars do, especially if you eat the whole fruit or vegetable and not just the juice.

# 3. WON'T WEIGH YOU DOWN



Fruits and vegetables tend to be low in calories, so they can help you manage your weight while still filling you up, thanks to the fiber and water they contain. Replacing higher-calorie foods with fruits and vegetables is an easy first step to a healthier eating plan.

# 4. SUPER FLEXIBLE SUPER FOODS



All forms of fruits and vegetables – fresh, frozen, canned, dried and 100% juice – can be part of a healthy diet. They can be eaten raw or cooked, whole or chopped, organic or not, and alone or in combination with other foods. They are among the most versatile, convenient and affordable foods you can eat.

# 5. A WHOLE BODY HEALTH BOOST



A healthy eating plan rich in fruits and vegetables can help lower your risk of many serious and chronic health conditions, including heart disease, stroke, obesity, high blood pressure, high blood cholesterol, diabetes, kidney disease, osteoporosis and some types of cancer. They're also essential to many daily functions of a healthy body.

[heart.org/addcolor](http://heart.org/addcolor)  
#ADDCOLOR





The best way to get all of the vitamins, minerals and nutrients you need is to eat a variety of colorful fruits and veggies. Add color to your plate each day with the five main color groups.

## RED & PINK

- beets
- cherries
- cranberries
- pink grapefruit
- pomegranates
- radicchio
- red radishes
- raspberries
- red apples
- red grapes
- red peppers
- red potatoes
- rhubarb
- strawberries
- tomatoes
- watermelons

## BLUE & PURPLE

- blackberries
- blueberries
- eggplants
- grapes
- plums
- prunes
- purple figs
- purple onions
- radicchio
- red cabbage
- red onions



## YELLOW & ORANGE

- acorn squash
- butternut squash
- apricots
- cantaloupes
- carrots
- corn
- grapefruit
- lemons
- mangoes
- nectarines
- oranges
- orange peppers
- papayas
- peaches
- pineapples
- pumpkins
- summer squash
- sweet potatoes
- tangerines
- yams
- yellow apples
- yellow peppers
- yellow squash

## WHITE & BROWN

- bananas
- brown pears
- cauliflower
- currants
- dates
- garlic
- Jerusalem artichokes
- mushrooms
- onions
- potatoes
- parsnips
- raisins
- shallots
- turnips

## GREEN

- artichokes
- asparagus
- avocados
- bok choy
- broccoli
- Brussels sprouts
- celery
- collard greens
- cucumbers
- green beans
- green cabbage
- green grapes
- green onions
- green peppers
- kale
- kiwis
- leeks
- limes
- mustard greens
- okra
- pears
- peas
- romaine lettuce
- snow peas
- spinach
- sugar snap peas
- watercress
- zucchini

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## **SPECIFIC**

- What exactly do you want to accomplish?

## **MEASURABLE**

- How will you track your progress towards your goal?

## **ACHIEVABLE**

- Is reaching your goal possible with your full effort?

## **REALISTIC**

- Do you have the resources and ability to achieve your goal? If not, how can you get them?

## **TIME-BOUND**

- When will your goal be achieved?

## **EXAMPLE OF A SMART GOAL:**

I will increase the number of fruit servings I eat daily by 2 cups within the next 3 months.

Personal SMART goal:

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