

TAKING TIME

by Rebecca Escott
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tute study showed that 75 percent of the United States population doesn't eat the recommended five or more servings of fruits and vegetables each day. Eating vegetables is not just an issue with children.

If you feel comfortable with the eating patterns you are modeling, check other areas. Vegetables with strong aromas, drab colors or mushy textures may be a turn off. I polled my nieces and nephews about their preferences. I found out one didn't like carrots because some time ago he had burnt his tongue on a spoonful of them. I found out that tomato sauce is okay, but tomato pieces in soup is "gross!" The six-year old said, "I kinda like spinach 'cause it's good for you. I know because of Pop-eye." The youngest told me she liked cucumbers, "especially with

cream." Her mother had to interpret that for me. "Cream means dipped in blue cheese dressing."

To my surprise — my nieces' and nephews' favorite vegetable was artichoke leaves dipped in butter. This may not be the most nutritious vegetable, but it is tasty. The fact that they love it illustrates several important principles of teaching children to eat vegetables.

1. Start early. If a four-year old likes artichokes, you know it is something she was introduced to at an early age. Serve a new food at the beginning of the meal. Only try one new item at a time. Then give your child the same freedom you would give an adult to like to dislike a particular item.

2. Enhance the taste. The arti-

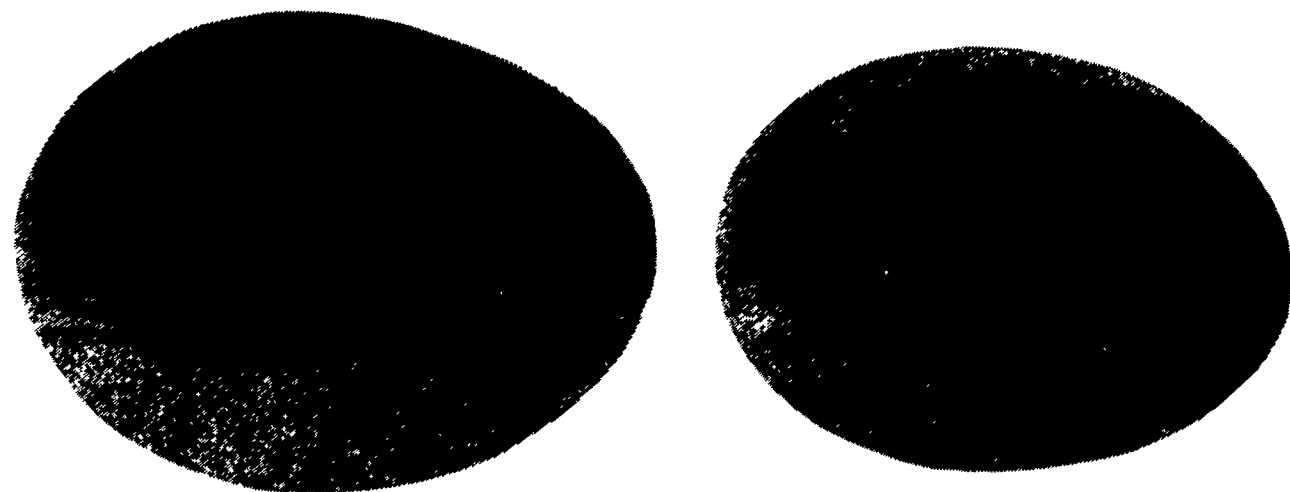
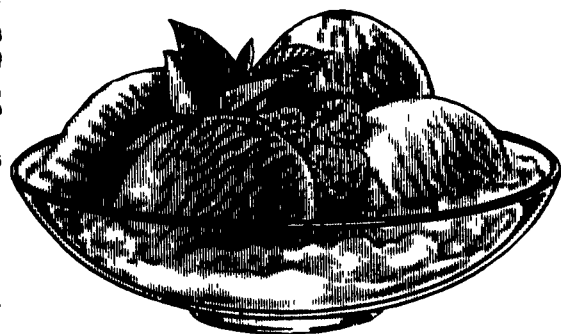
choke was probably a favorite because the BUTTER tastes good. Melted cheese, dips, and sauces can make a vegetable more appealing. But use caution with this suggestion. Some kids would rather have everything plain.

3. Finger food is fun. Peeling and dipping makes eating vegetables more like a treat. Anything you can do to involve the children in the process will increase their chances of eating the food. Let each child select one vegetable to buy during a shopping trip. Older children can help chop, toss, tear and serve the vegetables.

If following these principles still doesn't bring results, try different ways of serving the same vegetable — raw, cooked, sliced, grated, plain, with dips and sauces, sweet, spicy, cold, hot, alone, in casseroles, soups or baked products. Offer small servings.

Control the food supplies. Keep lots of healthy foods on hand — fruits, vegetables, cheese, whole grain bagels and muffins, popcorn, yogurt, peanut butter. Don't stock soda, chips and other high-fat, low-nutrition foods. That way hungry kids will have only good options.

Remember, the power struggles over vegetables at dinner may not be about food. Your children may want your attention. Turn off the stereo or TV and include them in the conversation. Re-think meal-time rules. Parents tend to expect better behavior from their kids at the table than they would in the family room. Be reasonable about what you expect from them given their ages.



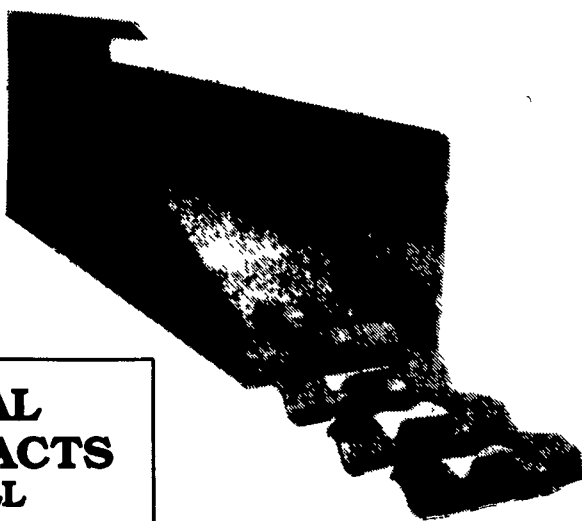
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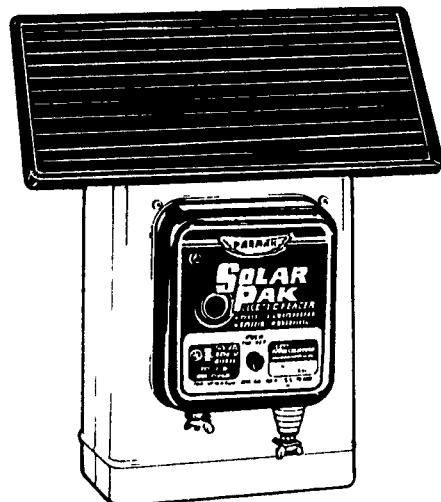
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