

Consuming Thoughts

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As the season has changed from summer to fall, so have the produce counters. The changing picture includes new colors and shapes. Pumpkins, cranberries, Indian corn and winter squash have arrived. There are also better buys in cabbage, cauliflower, celery, carrots, sweet potatoes and onions, as well as increasing supplies of apples, grapes and pears. Just as the produce counters change with the season, so you will want to change your family's meals to feature these fall vegetables.

To add a harvest touch to fall meals, try the different varieties of squash. Some easy-to-find popular types of squash are green zucchini, white scalloped patty pan and yellow summer squash. Some of the harder-rind fall types such as the acorn and bell-shaped butternut are beginning to make their appearance. Plan to serve squash

often because it can be prepared in many different and fascinating ways. Succulent squash can be steamed, boiled, baked or stir-fried and it combines deliciously with other foods.

Many recipes that use meat can be made by substituting squash and other vegetables for the meat — such as vegetable lasagna, baked egg dishes.

A fruit we tend to associate with fall is the pear, although the California Bartlett has been around since mid-summer. Now we are beginning to see some of the other varieties that will be with us through the winter months, such as Anjou, Bosc, Seckel and possibly some local varieties.

Ripe, ready-to-eat pears are not commonly sold in most of our produce departments. Unlike most other fruit, if allowed to ripen on the trees, pears will be grainy and

mushy and would not hold up in shipment.

To ripen pears, place them in a paper bag or a fruit ripening bowl at room temperature. Pears give off ethylene gas, a natural ripening substance, and keeping this gas enclosed enhances ripening. Some varieties change color from green to yellow, but all will become slightly soft. At this stage, they are ready to eat or they may be stored for a few more days in the refrigerator.

Another fruit that is generally harvested in Pennsylvania in September and October is the apple. Consumers can select from a number of varieties but remember to choose an apple variety best suited for your purposes. Some varieties are better suited for baking, while others are better for eating from your hand.

Varieties that are best to use when making a pie or apple dumpling because they retain their shape when cooked include Rome Beauty, Ida Red and Golden Delicious. A Stayman apple is also excellent for baking while the McIntosh apple is ideal to eat raw, in salads and in sauce. Red Delicious also are good in salads and lunch boxes but are not generally used for baking.

For more information on produce that are harvested this time of year, request the *Enjoy Nature's Fresh - Apples, Pears and Squash/Pumpkin*. Contact your local county Penn State Cooperative Extension Office or request these

from my office by sending a self-address stamped legal size envelope with 29¢ affixed to: *Enjoy Nature's Fresh*, Berks County Cooperative Extension, Berks County Ag Center, PO Box 520, Leesport, PA 19533-0520

Study Shows Dietitians Need To Rethink Meats

CHICAGO, Ill. — Although research shows deli/prepared meat is the most commonly consumed protein source in the United States, a new study reveals that dietitians continue to give consumers restrictive recommendations about eating these products.

The study's results were used as the basis for a new Meat Board Deli/Prepared Meats Committee advertising campaign aimed at dietitians. The extensive market research asked registered dietitians about their attitudes and recommendations to clients regarding deli/prepared meats, such as sausage, ham, hot dogs, deli roast beef and cold cuts. The Gallup Organization conducted the study for the Meat Board, funded by livestock producer checkoffs and processors.

The findings reveal that dietitians need to rethink their views and consumer recommendations of deli/prepared meats based on the new leaner alternatives available today. Some key points:

- In a typical week, respondents recommended that 5.4 meals should include some type of fresh meat (i.e., beef, pork, lamb or veal). On the contrary, respondents tended to recommend only three meals a week should include

deli/prepared meats.

Dietitians rated ham and deli roast beef most favorably of the products tested. On a 6-point scale (where "6" was high in fat), ham received a 3.1 rating, while deli roast beef received a 3.0. Although luncheon meat received a significantly higher score (5.0) on the fat content scale than ham or deli roast beef, it was lower than the ratings dietitians gave hot dogs, bacon and sausage.

- Almost one-half of dietitians rated deli roast beef and ham to be significantly more acceptable as part of a balanced diet than luncheon meats, hot dogs, bacon and sausage.

- Eighty-seven percent of respondents said they made client recommendations about specific kinds or types of processed meats.

- The most common types of specific recommendations to consumers about processed meats involved low-fat content (59 percent made such recommendations) and low salt or sodium content (30 percent). The only other recommendations given by more than 10 percent of respondents were to read labels for nutritional information (17 percent) and to watch the quantity of processed meats consumed (11 percent).

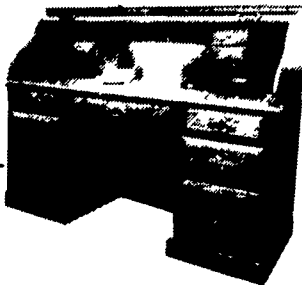
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