

Family Living Focus

Margaret R. Malehorn
Cumberland Co.
Extension Agent



Poison Prevention Week March 15-21

Young children constantly explore the world around them, touching and tasting everything they see. Unfortunately, the results could be devastating according to The Central

Pennsylvania Poison Center, at the Milton Hershey Medical Center of Penn State Geisinger Health System. March 15-21 is National Poison Prevention Week and we are reminded to poison proof the house.

Consumers Can Sniff Out Odor- Absorbing Produce

UNIVERSITY PARK (Centre Co.) — Ever crunched a carrot or munched an apple that tasted slightly different than normal? Chances are your taste buds raised a big stink about odors absorbed from other foods stored in close proximity.

Many fruits and vegetables tend to cause off-flavors and aromas in meat, dairy products, and other fruits and vegetables, said Peter Ferretti, professor of vegetable crops in Penn State's College of Agricultural Sciences. "The closer and more enclosed the fresh produce is, the more chance for odors to intermix," Ferretti said. "In an enclosed area like a refrigerator, odors can really be a problem. Consumers shouldn't experience startling taste changes three or four days after purchase, but beyond that you might have problems with off tastes."

Kathleen Brown, associate professor of post-harvest physiology at Penn State, suggests consumers try to rotate their produce purchases, using the oldest fruits and vegetables first so food items are not stored longer than a week to 10 days.

Ferretti also warns that odors are more likely to be absorbed at higher temperatures, which means consumers should not intermingle refrigerated fruits and vegetables with produce that is commonly stored at or slightly below room temperature, such as apples and onions.

Ferretti says that not every consumer will notice a difference in taste. "Taste is a genetic trait," he said. "Some people can sharply define tastes, and others have more bland taste ranges. Our sense of smell works in tandem with our taste buds, so an off-odor can affect how an apple tastes, even if the odor has not truly penetrated the skin."

Ferretti and Brown list some popular fruits and vegetables whose odors penetrate other foods.

- Apples. Apple odor is absorbed by cabbage, carrots, figs, onions, meat, eggs and dairy products. "Many consumers store apples in the refrigerator to keep them crisp, but in that space their odor may cause problems," Brown said.

- Carrots. Celery can absorb the odor of carrots. "It gives celery sort of an earthy taste," Ferretti said.

- Onions (large bulb types) and garlic. Aromas from bulb

onions affect apples, celery, potatoes and pears.

- Green bunching or scallion onions. Odors from these onions affect corn, figs, greens and mushrooms. "Scallion odor will noticeably affect flavor," Ferretti said.

- Pears. Pear odor is absorbed by cabbage, carrots, celery, onions and potatoes.

- Potatoes. Aromas from potatoes affect apples and pears. "Potatoes are almost always stored separately from other produce, so odor usually isn't a big problem," Ferretti said.

- Green Peppers. Green pepper odor will be absorbed by many botanical fruits, including pineapples. "Ripened green peppers, which usually are red, orange or yellow, do not have a strong aroma," Ferretti said.

- Citrus fruit. Citrus odor is absorbed by meat, eggs and dairy products.

- Grapes. Most commercial grapes are treated with sulfur dioxide for disease and insect control, giving the fruit a sulfurous aroma. "Produce experts say don't wash most fruits before refrigerating them, but grapes are the exception," Ferretti said. "By washing grapes thoroughly, the sulfur residue and smell will wash off, and grape skins protect against most injury during washing. Also, people tend to snack on grapes, eating three or four at a time. They aren't as likely to wash a small number of grapes, so it's better to wash them before refrigeration."

Brown suggests separating produce into individual bags, or using one crisper drawer only for fruits and the other for vegetables. Bagged or wrapped produce is less likely to absorb or emit odors.

If a piece of produce has been stored long enough to absorb odors, Ferretti recommends using the fruit or vegetable in a soup, stew or casserole where the flavors and aromas will intermingle.

Ferretti said consumers can counteract some of the odor absorption by placing a box of baking soda in the refrigerator, pantry or crisper drawer. "Baking soda also absorbs moisture," he said. "Baking soda can last quite a while, because only the top layer absorbs most of the odor and moisture, so homeowners can shake the top layer into the waste can and renew the treatment."

Children under the age of five are particularly at risk for poisoning because at their stage of development, and as their mobility increases, so does their ability to reach for a dangerous product. By safely managing the majority of poisoning exposures in the home, thousands of needless and costly emergency room visits can be eliminated.

The Central Pennsylvania Poison Center offers the following guidelines to help you poison proof your home.

- All hazardous household products should be kept in original, labeled containers; locked and out of sight of young children.

- Use only medications with child-resistant caps and use them correctly.

- Destroy old medicines by pouring them down the drain or toilet, and rinse the container before discarding it.

- Keep Ipecac syrup on hand to use only with the director's directions. Check its expiration date.

- Teach Mr Yuk means NO, Don't Touch, and Stay Away! Any substance, solid, liquid, or spray can be a poison.

- Place a Mr. Yuk sticker on your telephone with the Central PA Poison Control Center's telephone number, 1-800-521-6110, in case of a poison emergency.

- Avoid taking medicine in front of a child. Many children frequently attempt to imitate adult behavior and don't understand the risk of certain medication to young bodies.

- Refer to medicine by proper names, never calling medicine candy.

Look at your home from your child's point of view. Help your child to identify things inside and outside the home that can be potentially harmful if misused. Before you call the Poison Control Center gather the facts: age and weight of the child, name of the poison product. Try to determine the amount of the product ingested, and how much time has elapsed since the poisoning. Report all symptoms observed. Call the Pennsylvania Poison Control Center and give your name and phone number in case your call is interrupted. Follow their directions carefully.

Your efforts to poison proof your home could save a life. For additional information or emergency poisoning assistance, contact the Central PA Poison Center at 1-800-521-6110. For Mr. Yuk stickers, send a stamped, self-addressed envelope to the Central PA Poison Center, M.C. H043, P.O. Box 850, Hershey, PA 17033.

You ask You answer

This column is for readers who have questions but don't know who to ask for answers.

"You Ask—You Answer" is for non-cooking questions. When a reader sends in a question, it will be printed in the paper. Readers who know the answer are asked to respond by mailing the answer, which will then be printed in the paper.

Questions and Answers to this column should be addressed to You Ask—You Answer, Lancaster Farming, P.O. Box 609, Ephrata, PA 17522. Attention: Lou Ann Good.

Do not send a self-addressed, stamped envelope for a reply. If we receive the answer, we will publish it as soon as possible. Please include your phone number because we sometimes need to contact the person to clarify details. We will not publish your phone number unless you request it.

QUESTION — Nancy Wallace, 5240 Diem Rd., New Holland, PA 17557, would like an old C.W. Wood lard can. Her father had the business in New Holland until 1949. She has five children and would like a lard can to give to each of them. Also, she wants old Casper dolls for her daughter who collects them. She also collects miniature anvils and glass chicken on the nest if anyone has some to sell.

QUESTION — John Los, York, has become the owner of an SBR-16 ham radio receiver built in the late 1950s, from instructions in C.Q. magazine. The only problem he can see with the unit is a lack of filament voltage on the 6BJ6 tubes. He is looking for someone to help him with that problem and with the use of some of the 16 controls on the front of the set. It would be nice to see this old radio up and running again. He also has all possible paperwork needed for its repair.

QUESTION — Help! Scott Ehrisman, Richfield, writes that he is going insane because groundhogs are taking over his farm. It's hard on equipment, cow legs, trucks, and especially soybeans. He has tried smoking, drowning, trapping, gassing, burning, and shooting them. Anyone have a surefire way of exterminating these furry critters?

QUESTION — Wesley Martin, Lebanon, wants the words to the song "Swinging 'Neath the Old Apple Tree," and to the poem "I'm Hiding, I'm Hiding, but no one knows where. . . ."

QUESTION — Jean Imm, Reisterstown, Md., is interested in finding a red paper back Spray cookbook printed in the 1950s or 1960s that contains a recipe for Heritage Nut Cake.

QUESTION — Mary Troutman, R.4, Box 10, Everett, would like to purchase a Savory roaster, size 9x14 in good condition.

QUESTION — Michael Kramer, 1288 Roundhouse Rd., Quakertown, is looking for milk bottles or other items from Oeltjen-Bruns Dairy, believed to be near Egg Harbor, N.J., in the 1930s and 1940s.

(Turn to Page B28)

LANCO CONCRETE WALLS, INC.

• Agricultural • Commercial • Residential

We Do NRCS Approved Work • Quality Workmanship

- Retaining Walls
- Manure Pits
- Footers
- Bunker Silos
- Slatted Floor Deep Pits
- Flatwork

LANCO CONCRETE WALLS, INC.

PO BOX 256, Bird-In-Hand, PA 17505

CONTACT Steve Petersheim, Jr (717)291-4585 • FAX (717)291-4686