


Family Living Focus
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Do you live with a picky eater? I know that I do.

My husband of 30 years is a meat and potatoes man. No Italian food, no Chinese food and we don't even think of Thai or trendy Asian Fusion.

There are family legends of the hours he spent at the table refusing to eat the lima beans or blotting the tomato sauce off of meatballs when he was growing up.

I understand the frustration of parents of little children who are trying to ensure that their offspring are well fed and meeting their dietary needs.

While those of us who enjoy a myriad of culinary selections marvel at those who are so limited, most of us have foods that we do not enjoy. Some of this may be based on cultural preferences. Every culture has some odd foods that one needs to grow up with to really enjoy. Think of pickled pigs feet, pars-nips or gefelte fish.

The wonderful part of eating, however, is that there are so many foods to choose from, especially in the United States where groceries and produce stores are readily available to most of our population.

How do we deal with the picky eater? Find foods that they like in all of the food groups on the food guide pyramid and serve them in the traditional way preferred. Then branch out several times a week.

Advice to parents is to keep trying. Many babies will eat the beets or sweet potatoes with no problem until they are about 18 months of age, which is when children start to exert their independence.

Meals can become a battleground. Ellen Satter, author of "Feed Me, I'm Yours," says that it is our responsibility to provide nutritional foods for our children, it is their responsibility to eat it.

Don't assume that a child will not eat beets at a later time just because they did not eat them today. If they see you enjoying certain foods, they will include these foods someday when eating is more important than making a statement. Many day-care providers or grandmas report children relishing foods that their parents say their children will not eat.

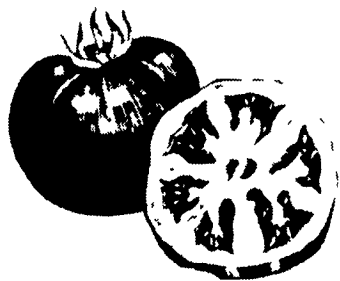
Involve picky eaters in food preparation. While their creations may not include as many ingredients as other cooks, enjoying the process invites increased interest in food. Fruits and vegetables are colorful, add crunch to foods and can be added to other favorites, especially when children are young. Putting peanut butter on apples or celery, adding peas to macaroni and cheese, using a little dip to invite carrot selection can increase vegetable or fruit intake.

When picky eaters are encouraged to pre-

pare their favorite recipes, they become more comfortable with the food world and the variety of food selections.

It can be discouraging for those preparing the food for picky eaters to face rejection. Some food habits may never change. I have interviewed 90 year olds who still did not eat vegetables. However, as family members or responsible adults, we should try to provide a healthy selection of foods most of the time. Introduce new foods occasionally. My husband will eat jicama, a vegetable from the Caribbean that adds crunch to salads. He just started to eat cucumbers. He adopted skim milk when he found out that it was cheaper than higher fat selections. His cooked vegetable selection still only includes peas and green beans — and of course, white potatoes. I often cook other foods for the rest of the family and serve him leftovers. Don't become a short order cook, especially for young children who are still developing their food likes and dislikes.

Living with a picky eater can be difficult. Research has shown that children who are exposed to more food choices early in life, will eat a wider variety of food as adults. But there are always those who never will. Rarely will coercion or guilt induce them to change. Try to keep mealtime pleasant and provide a healthy selection, even if the variety is limited at times. And find a good Thai restaurant to escape to when home cooking becomes boring.



Tim Martens of Martens Potato Farms meets with Debbie Richardson, Judy Yacavone, Betsey Bacelli, Jo Ellen Martino, Tracy Farrell, and Bill Jordan to talk about using value-added potato and squash products in schools.

Producers Market Products To Schools, Universities

Tracy Farrell
Jennifer Wilkins
Cornell Farm to
School Program

UTICA, N.Y. — Schools, colleges, and universities in New York are starting to hear from New York farmers who would like to see their products served in school cafeterias.

In late October, potato farmer Tim Martens of Martens Company made a bold and welcome entrepreneurial move. He contacted purchasing manager, Emily Franco, Cornell University (CU) Dining about the possibility of having his products served in the university dining halls. Instead of selling directly to CU Dining, Martens was interested in selling to the established distributors, Giambroni Brothers. This was exactly the approach that would work for CU Dining since direct purchases with many different producers would be too cumbersome.

Tim's next step was to bring his product in to be sampled by executive chef Delmar Crim, Franco and others on the CU Dining Staff. Martens showed them a number of his potato products so that they could see the size, packaging, and forms he had to offer. Martens grows potatoes and also prepares value added products such as fresh diced or wedged potatoes and cooked and mashed potatoes. Martens also packages chopped

fresh and cooked mashed butternut squash.

According to Franco, "We liked the fact that they are produced locally, given our commitment to NYS products. The product was pure in that it had few additives and when we compared pricing through our distributor, Martens Company's prices were lower."

CU Dining has specified purchase of Martens fresh-diced potato products to their distributor for several weeks now at a volume of about 80 cases per week.

While Franco admitted that the shelf life of the Martens product is slightly shorter than that of the former product this hasn't been an issue to date.

"We have been pleased and will continue to buy from Martens," says Franco.

Executive chef Delmar Crim adds some important advice. "It is the producer's job to make their product marketable. That includes packaging, insurance, supply conduit and price. Martens came to us with everything in place. Being a chef is much more than cooking good food, just as being a farmer or producer of food is much more than growing or production."

Public schools are also considering Martens potato products for use in school meals. In January Martens met with food service directors Judy Yacavone (Jamesville-Dewitt), Jo Ellen

Martino (Geneva), Debbie Richardson (Hannibal), and Betsey Bacelli (Owego-Apalachin); NYS Department of Agriculture representative Bill Jordan; and Cornell Farm to School Program representative Tracy Farrell, to talk about whether his value-added potato products could be incorporated in school menus.

Schools currently use many processed potato products such as frozen French fries and dried potatoes, but find that preparing fresh potatoes can take too much time. The impetus for the meeting was a comment made by Betsey Bacelli at a meeting of the NY Farms, NYS School Food Service Association Task Force. Bacelli suggested that a meaningful goal would be to replace the most popular menu item today in schools, French fries, with a New York grown alternative. Bill Jordan, of the NYS Department of Agriculture and Markets organized the meeting with Martens.

Directors agreed to test several different Martens potato and squash products in recipes and on menus and to report back on their testing at a follow up meeting in March. In the future, along with the potato and squash products they offer, Martens hopes to also produce a healthier, lower-fat New York French fry that schools could serve.

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