Discover the many benefits of adding vegetables and fruits to your meals. They are low in fat and calories, while providing fiber and other key nutrients. Most Americans should eat more than 3 cups — and for some, up to 6 cups — of vegetables and fruits each day. Vegetables and fruits don’t just add nutrition to meals. They can also add color, flavor, and texture. Explore these creative ways to bring healthy foods to your table.

1. Fire up the grill
Use the grill to cook vegetables and fruits. Try grilling mushrooms, carrots, peppers, or potatoes on a kabob skewer. Brush with oil to keep them from drying out. Grilled fruits like peaches, pineapple, or mangos add great flavor to a cookout.

2. Expand the flavor of your casseroles
Mix vegetables such as sautéed onions, peas, pinto beans, or tomatoes into your favorite dish for that extra flavor.

3. Planning something Italian?
Add extra vegetables to your pasta dish. Sip some peppers, spinach, red beans, onions, or cherry tomatoes into your traditional tomato sauce. Vegetables provide texture and low-calorie bulk that satisfies.

4. Get creative with your salad
Toss in shredded carrots, strawberries, spinach, watercress, orange segments, or sweet peas for a flavorful, fun salad.

5. Salad bars aren’t just for salads
Try eating sliced fruit from the salad bar as your dessert when dining out. This will help you avoid any baked desserts that are high in calories.

6. Get in on the stir-frying fun
Try something new! Stir-fry your veggies — like broccoli, carrots, sugar snap peas, mushrooms, or green beans — for a quick and easy addition to any meal.

7. Add them to your sandwiches
Whether it is a sandwich or wrap, vegetables make great additions to both. Try sliced tomatoes, romaine lettuce, or avocado on your everyday sandwich or wrap for extra flavor.

8. Be creative with your baked goods
Add apples, bananas, blueberries, or pears to your favorite muffin recipe for a treat.

9. Make a tasty fruit smoothie
For dessert, blend strawberries, blueberries, or raspberries with frozen bananas and 100% fruit juice for a delicious frozen fruit smoothie.

10. Liven up an omelet
Boost the color and flavor of your morning omelet with vegetables. Simply chop, sauté, and add them to the egg as it cooks. Try combining different vegetables, such as mushrooms, spinach, onions, or bell peppers.

It’s easy to eat more vegetables! Eating vegetables is important because they provide vitamins and minerals and are low in calories. To fit more vegetables in your day, try them as snacks and add them to your meals.

1. Discover fast ways to cook
Cook fresh or frozen vegetables in the microwave for a quick and easy dish to add to any meal. Steam green beans, carrots, or bell peppers for a quick side dish.

2. Be ahead of the game
Cut up a batch of bell peppers, cauliflower, or broccoli. Pre-package them to use when time is limited. Enjoy them in a casserole, stir-fry, or as a snack with hummus.

3. Choose vegetables rich in color
Brighten your plate with vegetables that are red, orange, or dark green. They are full of vitamins and minerals. Try acorn squash, cherry tomatoes, sweet potatoes, or collard greens. They not only taste great but are good for you, too.

4. Check the freezer aisle
Try adding frozen vegetables, such as corn, peas, edamame, or spinach, to your favorite dish. Look for frozen vegetables without added sauces, gravies, butter, or cream.

5. Stock up on veggies
Canned vegetables are a great addition to any meal, so keep on hand canned tomatoes, kidney beans, garbanzo beans, mushrooms, and beets. Select those labeled as “reduced sodium,” “low sodium,” or “no salt added.”

6. Make your garden salad glow with color
Brighten your salad by using colorful vegetables such as black beans or avocados, sliced red bell peppers or onions, shredded radishes or carrots, and chopped red cabbage or watercress. Your salad will not only look good but taste good, too.

7. Sip on some vegetable soup
Heat it and eat it. Try tomato, butternut squash, or garden vegetable soup. Look for reduced- or low-sodium soups. Make your own soups with a low-sodium broth and your favorite vegetables.

8. While you’re out
If dinner is away from home, no need to worry. When ordering, ask for an extra side of vegetables or a side salad instead of the typical fries or bread. Ask for toppings and dressings on the side.

9. Savor the flavor of seasonal vegetables
Buy vegetables that are in season for maximum flavor at a lower cost. Check your local supermarket specials for the best in-season buys. Or visit your local farmers market.

10. Vary your veggies
Choose a new vegetable that you’ve never tried before. Find recipes online at What’s Cooking.fns.usda.gov.

Gardening Fun for the Family!

The Pizza Herb Garden

Most kids love pizza. Who can blame them? Pizza with its gooey cheese, delicious crust and tomato sauce dripping with herbs and spices is a favorite of many adults as well. A pizza herb garden is a terrific way for a child to learn about culinary herb gardening and where one of their favorite foods gets its great taste.

A pizza herb garden consists of growing basil, parsley, and oregano. To make it even more exciting for the child, you can let him or her grow a few tomatoes as well. Plum tomatoes make a good choice, as these veggies work especially well when using them for making tomato sauce.