

# The Home Extension Line

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## Keep Cool Naturally

In warm climates such as Florida, air-conditioning accounts for **one third of the electric bill!** Keep your home naturally cool with these energy-saving green design tips.

### 1. Insulate, insulate, insulate.

Insulate your ceiling with up to ten inches of insulation to reduce your air-conditioning by 30%. Use blown-in insulation to fill forgotten spaces around pipes, chimneys, recessed lights and crawlspaces. Even old blankets or fabric scraps can work as low-cost insulators. When building or remodeling, install the highest R-value insulation appropriate to your needs. [Insulating Your Attic \(Florida Power and Light\)](#)

### 2. Seal windows and doors

**Up to 40% of heating and cooling is lost through windows and doors.** If you can see daylight around a closed door, it needs to be weather-stripped. Most windows and doors can be sealed with rope caulk. Seal fireplaces with tight-fitting dampers when not in use.

### 3. Retrofit your windows

Windows are the largest source of "solar gain"—the natural heating effect of the sun. Retrofit windows with glazing or window films to help reduce your air-conditioning and protect your carpet and furniture. Find these products at a home improvement store or hire a professional to do the job. [Insulating Windows \(Florida Power and Light\)](#)

### 4. Block out summer sun

During the summer season, shade windows with opaque blinds, roman shades, quilts or even cardboard to reduce solar gain. Shade materials should cover ½ inch beyond the window frame. For ideal coverage, secure them using hook-and-eye closures, Velcro or duct tape. Install extended roof or window awnings to increase shade. Shutters will also work, but can detach and cause damage in high winds. Check out these techniques at the Florida House Learning Center. [Florida House Learning Center](#) 4600 Beneva Road South, Sarasota 941-316-1200.

**5. Adopt cool colors**

Paint the house a light color to reduce solar gain, and use light-colored roofing materials. A white roof covering can retrofit dark-colored roofs. Choose a light-colored driveway surface rather than black. Plant tall shrubbery and trees near a concrete driveway to cool it down or build a carport. Limit paved parking surfaces and use natural materials, such as mulch, for walkways.

**6. Plant trees for passive cooling**

Look at the situation of your home in respect to the path of the sun throughout the seasons. The southern exposure receives the most sun; east and west walls come next. Plant native shrubs and trees in these areas to increase shade and reduce heat and humidity. If you're worried about reducing winter sunlight, plant deciduous trees or vines.

**7. Take advantage of cool breezes**

Cross-ventilate your home by opening windows on the north-northwest and south-southeast walls (cool fronts normally move from the northwest to the southeast in Florida). In two-story buildings, set up a fan facing out in an upper-story southern window and use it to pull air through the house from lower-story northern windows. If you use A/C during daylight hours, turn it off and open windows at night.

[US Department of Energy Consumer Energy Information](#)

**8. Maintain air circulation**

Install vents in the bottom of doors to help circulate air and reduce air-conditioning costs. Kitchens and bathrooms should have exhaust fans to dispense hot, humid air to the outside. Shut doors and turn thermostats off in rooms that do not need to be cooled.

**9. Purchase an energy-efficient air-conditioning unit**

Install an air-conditioning unit that fits your space and cooling needs, with a high Seasonal Energy Efficiency (SEER) rating. Maintain your A/C by checking ductwork for leaks and replacing filters annually. If your home has a dual unit, locate the outside portion in a shady, cool area.

[ENERGYSTAR Products](#)

**10. Turn down the A/C**

During summer months, keep the thermostat setting on the highest comfortable temperature—at least 78°F. Always shut off lights, computers, TVs, and appliances. If you turn on the fans along with the air-conditioning, you can raise the thermostat two degrees. When you go out of the house, turn it up to about 85°F, or consider purchasing a programmable thermostat to automatically adjust indoor temperatures.

Source: [www.sustainablesarasota.com](http://www.sustainablesarasota.com)

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# Fresh Florida Blueberries

**(Antioxidant-rich blueberries are available from March through June)**

If you're eating plenty of blueberries, you can bet your body isn't singing the blues. Those sweet, tangy little berries are packed with antioxidants to neutralize free radicals-unstable oxygen molecules associated with cancer, heart disease, and the effects of aging.

"Blueberries are one of the most healthful foods you can eat," said Donna Miller, Vice President of the Florida Blueberry Growers Association. "Per cup, they are the highest antioxidant fruit or vegetable available. They are fat and sodium free and are a good source of fiber, potassium, and vitamins A and C."

Studies show that eating blueberries can improve eye health, lower cholesterol, protect against urinary tract infections, and reduce the risk of certain cancers. In addition, researchers have found that a diet rich in blueberries may help stop age-related memory loss. Blueberries get their memory-enhancing punch from anthocyanins, reddish-blue pigments; these powerful antioxidants are thought to increase communication between aging brain cells.

"The word is out about the health benefits of blueberries, and growers are seeing increased demand for their product," said Florida Agriculture Commissioner Charles H. Bronson. "It's no wonder these perennial favorites are only growing in popularity. They're bursting with nutrients; plus, they're delicious, satisfying, and so low in calories that even dieters can enjoy them."

The Florida blueberry season starts in mid to late March and ends in June. Most of the state's commercial blueberry acreage can be found in Bay, Hamilton, Suwannee, Columbia, Alachua, Marion, Lake, Polk, Hillsborough, and Highlands counties. In 2004, Florida's cash receipts for blueberries totaled over \$25 million.

There are two main types of blueberries grown in Florida — southern highbush and rabbiteye. Southern highbush blueberries are early-season blueberries, ripening, on average, about four to six weeks before rabbiteyes grown in the same location. Southern highbush blueberries in central and south-central Florida ripen as early as mid March, long before blueberries grown any place else in the United States. In the spring, the only fresh blueberries are Florida blueberries, so they fetch high prices and enjoy nationwide demand.

If you're shopping for blueberries at the supermarket, Miller offers these tips: "When you're selecting blueberries, make sure they have their natural white, powdery bloom. It's a natural food starch and protects the berry. Some people think it's a spray and try to wash it off, but it's a good thing and helps the blueberry stay fresher longer."

Blueberries don't ripen once they've been harvested, so make sure the berries you choose are deep blue-gray without any hint of red. Shake the container gently to check that the berries move freely; if they don't, they might be mushy or moldy.

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"Make sure the berries are dry," Miller said, "and that they look so good you can hardly wait to have one. You can really tell if the berries have aged. They shouldn't be wrinkled or shriveled."

Ripe blueberries should be stored in a covered container in the refrigerator, where they will keep for up to a week. Before refrigerating, sort through the berries and remove any that are moldy or damaged. Berries shouldn't be washed until just prior to use.

Blueberries are a health food that is also a convenience food. They don't require peeling or coring, and they're bite-sized, so you can eat them on the go. Snack on them plain or sprinkle them over cereal or add them to pancake batter and smoothies.

**Source: [www.Florida Agriculture.com](http://www.Florida Agriculture.com)**

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## How to Reduce Electronics Waste

Environmentally responsible electronics use involves not only proper end-of-life disposition of obsolete equipment, but also purchasing new equipment that has been designed with environmentally preferable attributes. Think about this when purchasing new equipment, and ask your retailer or electronics supplier about environmentally preferable electronics. Households, companies, and governmental organizations can encourage electronics manufacturers to design greener electronics by purchasing computers and other electronics with environmentally preferable attributes and by requesting takeback options at the time of purchase. Look for electronics that:

- Contain fewer toxic constituents.
- Use recycled materials in the new product.
- Are energy efficient (e.g., showing the Energy Star label).
- Are designed for easy upgrading or disassembly.
- Use minimal packaging.
- Offer leasing or takeback options.
- Have been recognized by independent certification groups.

**Source: [www.epa.gov](http://www.epa.gov)**

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## Healthquicks

Good oral hygiene is an important part of a healthy body. To clean your teeth properly, brush them at least twice a day with a soft-bristled brush and floss daily. For best results, replace your toothbrush every three months.

**Source: Mayo Clinic, HealthQuest magazine**

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## Nutrition Shortfalls for Children

Children are not getting recommended amounts of potassium and fiber. Eating a colorful variety of fruits and vegetables can help meet their needs.

### Potassium

#### *Why is it important?*

Diets rich in potassium have been shown to lower blood pressure and blunt the effect of salt on blood pressure. It may also reduce the risk of kidney stones and possibly decrease bone loss with age.

#### *How much is recommended?*

The recommended daily intake of potassium for children 1 to 3 years of age is 3,000 mg; 4 to 8 year-olds need 3,800 mg and 9 to 13 year-olds should have 4,500 mg of potassium each day.

#### *How much do children get?*

Boys 1 to 3 years old need 38% more potassium to meet the recommended amount and girls need 30% more. The shortfall for 4 to 8 year old boys is 41% and for girls in this age range it is 44%. The shortfall for boys 9 to 13 is 38%; girls in this age range fall short of the recommended amount of potassium by 52%.

#### *Why are fruits and vegetables important?*

Most fruits and vegetables contribute potassium to the diet and are low in calories. Potassium-rich fruits and vegetables include leafy green vegetables, fruit from vines, and root vegetables. Although meat, milk and cereal products contain potassium, the form of potassium in these foods is not as readily available for absorption.

### Fiber

#### *Why is it important?*

Diets rich in dietary fiber help promote healthy bowel motility and help reduce the risk of type 2 diabetes and coronary heart disease. Chronic constipation is one of the most common causes of illness in childhood. Fiber also promotes a feeling of fullness, which is important in weight control. Helping children reach and maintain a healthy weight is critical to fighting the obesity epidemic.

#### *How much is recommended?*

Recommended dietary fiber intake is 14 grams for every 1000 calories consumed.

#### *How much do children get?*

Children get about half the recommended amount of fiber.

#### *Why are fruits and vegetables important?*

Whole fruits and vegetables are an important source of fiber. All fruits and vegetables contain fiber and many are good sources of fiber. Fruits and vegetables are a terrific way to get needed fiber without adding unnecessary calories.

**Source: Produce for Better Health Foundation**

# Proper Food Safety with Slow Cooker

The U.S. Department of Agriculture's Meat and Poultry Hotline encourages Americans to take the necessary steps to ensure proper food safety when preparing meals in a slow cooker.

Home cooks are discovering many sophisticated dishes can be prepared in a slow cooker. While many people long for the inviting smells of classics like beef stew, chicken noodle soup and casseroles, there is a vast collection of slow cooker recipes for everything from regional and ethnic dishes to low-carb and vegetarian dinners. Even wild game recipes tailored for a slow cooker are available.

"While slow cooking is a great way to prepare a home-cooked meal and have it ready at the end of a busy working day for your family to enjoy, don't take any food safety shortcuts in the process," said USDA Under Secretary for Food Safety Dr. Richard Raymond. "Our recommendations are easy to follow and help reduce the threat of foodborne illness from meals cooked at lower temperatures for longer periods of time."

## Is A Slow Cooker Safe?

Yes, it cooks foods slowly at a low temperature — generally between 170° and 280° F. The low heat helps less expensive, leaner cuts of meat become tender and shrink less.

The direct heat, lengthy cooking time and the steam created within the tightly covered container combine to destroy bacteria and make the slow cooker a safe process for cooking foods.

## Safe Beginnings

Begin with a clean cooker, clean utensils and a clean work area and wash hands before and during food preparation.

Keep perishable foods refrigerated until preparation time. Separate and store cut meat and vegetables in the refrigerator. The slow cooker might take several hours to reach a safe, bacteria-killing temperature.

## Thaw & Cut Ingredients

Always defrost meat and poultry before putting it into a slow cooker. Choose to make foods with high moisture content, such as chili, soup, stew or spaghetti sauce. Cut food into chunks or small pieces to ensure thorough cooking. Do not use the slow cooker for large pieces like a roast or a whole chicken because the food will cook so slowly it could remain in the bacterial "Danger Zone" — between 40 °F and 140 °F — too long.

## Use the Right Amount of Food

Fill the slow cooker no less than half full and no more than two-thirds full. Vegetables cook slower than meat and poultry in a slow cooker so if using them, put vegetables in first, at the bottom and around sides of the appliance. Then add meat and cover the food with liquid such as broth, water or barbecue sauce. Keep the lid in place. While food is cooking and once it's done, food will stay safe as long as the cooker is operating.

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### **Power Out**

Slow cookers offer the convenience of allowing people to prepare meals while they are away from home. If for some reason the power goes out and you are not home, there is no way to tell if the food got fully cooked so it is best to throw the food away.

If you're home when the power goes out, it is safe to finish cooking the ingredients immediately by some other means: on a gas stove, on the outdoor grill or at a house where the power is on.

When you are at home, and if the food was completely cooked before the power went out, the food should remain safe up to two hours in the cooker with the power off.

### **Handling Leftovers**

Store leftovers in shallow covered containers and refrigerate within two hours after cooking is finished. Reheating leftovers in a slow cooker is not recommended. However, cooked food can be brought to steaming on the stovetop or in a microwave oven and then put into a preheated slow cooker to keep hot for serving.

Consumers with food safety questions can call the toll-free USDA Meat and Poultry Hotline at 1-(888) 674-6854. The hotline is available in English and Spanish and can be reached from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. (Eastern Time) Monday through Friday. Recorded food safety messages are available 24 hours a day.

**Source: US Dept. of Agriculture**

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## **How to Say “I Love You” to an Elderly Family Member**

1. “I’ve come for a visit.”
2. “Do you remember when we ...?”
3. “I’ve brought pictures.”
4. “Let’s go for a drive.”
5. “Come walk with me.”
6. “I brought new stationary and stamps so we can write letters together.”
7. “Time for a manicure.”
8. “I have so much to tell you about.”
9. “Look at these old pictures I found.”
10. “I love you.”

**Source: Carolyn S. Wilken, Ph.D., M.P.H., Associate Professor, Family, Youth and Community Sciences, Cooperative Extension Service, University of Florida, Gainesville, Florida**

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# 10 Great Health Foods: Best Bets for Eating Well

What are some best bets for eating well? Mark Glen, a registered dietitian at Mayo Clinic offers his top picks. These 10 health foods are some of the healthiest because they meet at least three of the following criteria:

- Are a good or excellent source of fiber, vitamins, minerals and other nutrients.
- Are high in phytonutrients and antioxidant compounds, such as vitamins A and E and beta carotene.
- May help reduce the risk of heart disease and other health conditions.
- Are low in calorie density, meaning you get a larger portion size with a fewer number of calories.
- Are readily available.

## Apples

**Why eat apples?** Apples are an excellent source of pectin, a soluble fiber that can lower blood cholesterol and glucose levels. Fresh apples are also a good source of the vitamin C – an antioxidant that protects your body's cells from damage. Vitamin C also helps form the connective tissue collagen, keeps your capillaries and blood vessels healthy, and aids in the absorption of iron and folate.

## Almonds

**Why eat almonds?** These tear-shaped nuts are packed with nutrients – fiber, riboflavin, magnesium, iron and calcium. In fact, almonds have more calcium than any other nut – 70 milligrams (mg) in 23 almonds. And one serving of almonds provides half of your body's Recommended Dietary Allowance (RDA) of vitamin E.

Like all nuts, almonds provide one of the best plant sources of protein. And they're good for your heart. Most of the fat in almonds is monounsaturated fat – a healthier type of fat that may help lower blood cholesterol levels.

## Blueberries

**Why eat blueberries?** Blueberries are a rich source of plant compounds (phytonutrients). As with cranberries, phytonutrients in blueberries may help prevent urinary tract infections. Blueberries may also improve short-term memory and promote healthy aging.

Blueberries are also a low-calorie source of fiber and vitamin C – 1 cup of fresh blueberries has 83 calories, 3.5 grams of fiber and 14 mg of vitamin C.

## Broccoli

**Why eat broccoli?** Besides being a good source of calcium, potassium, folate and fiber, broccoli contains phytonutrients – a group of compounds that may help prevent chronic disease, such as heart disease, diabetes and some cancers. Broccoli is also a good source of vitamins A and C – antioxidants that protect your body's cells from damage.

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### Red Beans

**Why eat red beans?** Red beans — including small red beans and dark red kidney beans — are good sources of iron, magnesium, phosphorus, potassium, copper and thiamin. They're also an excellent low-fat, low-calorie source of protein and dietary fiber. Red beans also contain phytonutrients that may help prevent chronic diseases such as cardiovascular disease and cancer.

### Salmon

**Why eat salmon?** Salmon is an excellent source of omega-3 fatty acids – a type of fat that makes your blood less likely to form clots that may cause heart attacks. Omega-3s may also protect against irregular heartbeats that may cause sudden cardiac death, decrease triglyceride levels, decrease the growth of artery-clogging plaques, lower blood pressure and reduce the risk of stroke.

In addition to being an excellent source of omega-3s, salmon is low in saturated fat and cholesterol and is a good source of protein.

### Spinach

**Why eat spinach?** Spinach is high in vitamins A and C and folate. It's also a good source of riboflavin, vitamin B-6, calcium, iron and magnesium. The plant compounds in spinach may boost your immune system and may help keep your hair and skin healthy.

### Sweet potatoes

**Why eat sweet potatoes?** The deep orange-yellow color of sweet potatoes tells you that they're high in the antioxidant beta carotene. Food sources of beta carotene, which are converted to vitamin A in your body, may help slow the aging process and reduce the risk of some cancers. Sweet potatoes are also good vegetables, they're fat-free and relatively low in calories – one small sweet potato has just 54 calories.

### Vegetable juice

**Why drink vegetable juice?** Vegetable juice has most of the vitamins, minerals and other nutrients found in the original vegetables and is an easy way to include vegetables in your diet. Tomato juice and vegetable juices that include tomatoes, are good sources of lycopene, an antioxidant which may reduce the risk of heart attack, prostate cancer and possibly other types of cancer. Some vegetable and tomato juices are very high in sodium, so be sure to select the low-sodium varieties.

### Wheat germ

**Why eat wheat germ?** At the center of a grain of wheat is the wheat germ – the part of the seed that's responsible for the development and growth of the new plant sprout. Though only a small part of the wheat seed, the germ is a highly concentrated source of nutrients, including niacin, thiamin, riboflavin, vitamin E, folate, magnesium, phosphorus, potassium, iron and zinc. The germ also contains protein, fiber and some fat.

**Source:** [www.MayoClinic.com](http://www.MayoClinic.com)

# Future Fashions Made of Silky Smooth Wool

Forget the "itch factor." A new "biopolishing" process developed by the Agricultural Research Service ([ARS](#)) makes scratchy wool feel silky and look whiter. Not only does it change the texture and appearance of wool, it also modifies the surface to make it shrink-proof.

Besides comfort and form, the method improves aesthetics, according to J. Cardamone, a textile chemist at the ARS Eastern Regional Research Center in Wyndmoor, Pa.

The process results in an increased shine on the fabric's surface from the removal of projecting fiber yarn ends. This contributes to a smooth feel, which increases wool's appeal in women's fashions.

In biopolishing, the wool is pre-treated with a stable, activated peroxide, followed by a treatment with either serine or cysteine protease cellular enzymes.

The hydrogen peroxide step bleaches the wool at lower temperatures and in half the time as conventional techniques, which results in reduced processing costs, according to Cardamone. The bleaching technique also makes it easier to dye the wool.

Shrinkage in conventional wool occurs during machine washing because the resulting heat and pressure lock wool's scales in place. The wool is shrink-proofed by another step that uses enzymes to modify wool's surface by degrading its proteins with enzymes called proteases, so its scales no longer get tangled-up. Shrinkage is controlled without loss in strength or elastic recovery.

Wool scales are usually resistant to enzyme attack, but in biopolishing, enzymes "digest" the scales, resulting in a smoother surface.

Biopolishing can be applied to multiple surfaces--everything from loose fibers to yarn, fabric or completed garments. [The American Wool Council](#), a division of the American Sheep Industry (ASI) Association, provided partial funding for the research.

The biopolishing process is being tested in woolen mills. There is already interest from the U.S. military in wool treated with the biopolishing process, especially for the manufacture of underwear for troops.

**Source: Agricultural Research Service, US Department of Agriculture**

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# Stay Healthy at Animal Exhibits this Summer!

From watching calf roping at the rodeo to petting lambs at the county fair, there are many ways to explore the animal world this spring and summer. Exhibits such as petting zoos and fairs allow children of all ages to have the thrilling experience of coming face to face with animals. This interaction allows people to learn more about animals and helps to build an important human-animal bond.

Unfortunately, many people become sick every year because of a visit to an animal exhibit. It is important to remember that animals sometimes carry germs that are harmful to humans. When people forget to wash their hands after petting an animal or bring food into an area where animals are being housed, they are at risk for becoming ill. Let's make this spring and summer healthier seasons. Below are some tips to help you prevent illness when visiting animal exhibits.

## **If you are visiting an animal exhibit:**

### Hand washing stations

- Find out where hand-washing stations are located.
- Always wash your hands after petting animals or touching the animal enclosure, especially before eating and drinking.
- Running water and soap are best. Use hand gels if running water and soap are not available.

### **Food and drinks:**

- Keep food and drinks out of animal areas.
- Do not share your food with animals.
- Do not eat or drink raw (unpasteurized) dairy products.

### **Children:**

- Children younger than 5 years old need supervision.
- Never allow children to put their hands or objects (for example: pacifiers) in their mouth while interacting with animals.
- Hand washing should be supervised.

Elderly persons or others who might have a difficult time fighting off infections should use special precautions. Go to [http://www.cdc.gov/healthypets/spotlight\\_an\\_exhbts.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/healthypets/spotlight_an_exhbts.htm) for additional information.

**Source: [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov)**

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# Florida Food Fare

By Jean Meadows

## Passion Fruit

**Description:** The passion fruit is a somewhat ugly, crinkled dark purple to brownish sphere - which belies its intense perfumed flavor when cut open. Only the fleshy interior, consisting largely of pinkish yellow seeds, is eaten. There is a large passion fruit called the giant granadilla, with fruit similar to a melon, but the ones most available are smaller.

**Available:** April through August. Occasionally the fresh fruit is found in local markets, but mostly it is a dooryard product. Select passion fruits that are firm and free from large, brown soft spots. Wrinkled fruit is a sign of full maturity and means they are ripe to use. The processed juice is carried in some markets, either canned or frozen.

**History:** The name of "passion fruit" resulted from the diaries of early Spanish missionaries who recorded accounts of seeing the flowers during church holiday seasons, especially during the Lent and Easter holidays, reminding them of the passion of Christ. Today, the use of the tangy passion fruit juice is said to soothe the sensual and lusty passions of savage taste buds, a far cry from the early church writings.

**Nutritional Value:** One-half cup of juice has: 44 calories; 1.1 g protein; 11.8 g carbohydrates; 5.2 g dietary fiber; 35 RE vitamin A; 15 mg vitamin C and 348 mg potassium. The yellow variety is much higher in vitamin A with 120 RE per one-half cup.

**Storing:** Whole passion fruit may be refrigerated for several weeks or frozen until needed. Extracted pulp or juice may be stored in the freezer for several months in moisture/vapor proof containers.

**Basic Uses:** The flesh is delicious eaten as it is, or to flavor fruit salads and juices. Flavor is intense but pulp can be eaten out of hand once you have cut through the leathery skin. The juice is sometimes described as a blend of citrus, pineapple and guava. Passion fruit seeds are edible so you can swallow them with the pulp. You can also strain the juice and add it to other fruit juices to make a distinctive punch. Passion fruit is one of the primary ingredients in many commercial tropical punch beverages.

### Recipes

#### Passion Fruit and Walnut Vinaigrette

1/4 cup passion fruit juice	1/4 teaspoon ginger
1/2 teaspoon salt	1 tablespoon anchovy paste
1/8 teaspoon ground pepper	1/4 teaspoon prepared spicy mustard
1/4 cup finely chopped walnuts	1-2 finely chopped sprigs fresh watercress
3/4 cup olive oil	

Combine passion fruit juice, salt, pepper, walnuts, olive oil, ginger, anchovy paste, mustard and watercress in shake container. Shake to combine. Pour over your favorite tossed salad. Yield: approx. 1 cup.

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