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Family and Consumer  
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## Making Water “Cents”

By making a few small changes to your daily routine, you can save a significant amount of water, which will save you money and preserve water supplies for future generations.

**Fix That Leak** – Leaky faucets can waste more than 3,000 gallons of water each year and a leaky toilet can waste 200 gallons of water every day. To tell if your toilet has a leak, place a drop of blue toilet bowl cleaner in the tank: if the color shows in the bowl without flushing, you have a leak. Check under your sink and your outside faucets for slow dripping leaks.

**Make It A Full Load** – The average washing machine uses about 41 gallons of water per load. Wash only full loads of laundry or use the right load size setting on your machine.

**Shower Power** – A full tub requires 70 gallons of water. Taking a five minute shower uses 10-25 gallons.

If you take the time and effort to make small changes in water usage, you can lower your water bill and help protect our water resources.

**Source: Living Well in Florida, Gulf Coast Edition, University of Florida**

# Save Some Green by Going Green With Your Grocery Shopping

Perhaps you haven't yet started on recycling the many containers used to package food. And, maybe you have limited access to some of the "greener" food products on the market. Yet there are things you can do if you're interested in a "greener," more environmentally friendly household. Following are some easy steps you can take right now. They also will save you money, adding a little extra green to your wallet!

1. **Size matters.** When choosing between a large container and several small containers that add up to the same volume: Consider whether buying the large container would serve the same purpose and save you money. For example, do you really need to buy individual boxes (and more packaging) of juice if they all are drunk in the same week and at your kitchen table?
2. **It's in the bag.** While we could all carry our own reusable shopping bags when we go shopping, if we don't we can reuse any plastic grocery bags we might accumulate to line small wastebaskets. Put a few bags in the bottom of the waste basket BEFORE you line it, so there's another one ready to use after one is filled.
3. **Gotta have a plan!** Plan ahead and shop less often for groceries or shop in conjunction with other errands taking you near a grocery store. The result is a reduction in the use and cost of fuel needed to transport food.
4. **Practice the 3Rs.** Produce less waste and save money by practicing the 3 Rs of reduce, reuse and recycle. Here are three examples in relation to throwing away leftover food. Not only does tossing leftovers waste money, it also wastes the energy resources and packaging materials associated with the tossed food.
  - **Reduce** the amount of leftover food tossed by serving smaller portions of foods that frequently produce leftovers or ...
  - **Reuse** leftovers by serving them again in a day or two or freezing them for future use, or ...
  - **Recycle** leftovers into a different type of meal; for example – add that extra rice to a soup the next night.
5. **Don't be a "spoil"-sport.** Throwing away spoiled food is related to tossing leftovers. Reduce the amount of spoiled food that gets tossed through such practices as:
  - Read labels for "use by," "expiration," or "best if used by" dates.
  - Refrigerate and freeze foods at recommended temperatures – 0 degrees F or lower for freezers and 40 degrees F or lower for the refrigerator section. An appliance thermometer assures your refrigerator/freezer is maintaining these temperatures.
  - Follow recommended storage times for foods. For example, some containers may specify a recommended time frame in which to eat a food after it is opened.
  - Avoid buying so much food in bulk that it spoils before you can use it.
6. **Drink to this.** Buy a reusable water bottle and fill it with tap water. Your investment soon will pay for itself.

The next step: For more things you can do to live a greener lifestyle and reduce energy expenditures, visit [www.epa.gov/climatechange/emissions/ind\\_calculator.html](http://www.epa.gov/climatechange/emissions/ind_calculator.html) the Environmental Protection Agency's Website and calculate your "carbon footprint."

## Meet the Hybrids

Studies show that variety provides cancer-fighting benefits. Well, move over apples and bananas, the world of fruits and vegetables is adding something new.

If you've wandered around a farmer's market or the produce aisles lately, you've probably noticed a few unusual newcomers. There are pluotcots, apriums and broccoflower – to name just a few. These odd sounding selections are part of a new breed of hybrids, the result of mergers between familiar fruits and vegetables. Fruits that were unheard-of in the United States a few years ago now reportedly bring in about \$100 million a year.

With these hybrids, plant breeders are creating novel flavors, colors, textures and shapes. As an added bonus, these designer fruits and vegetables can provide variety with a fresh mix of cancer-fighting phytochemicals and nutrients.

### Plant A + Plant B = wow?!

The new hybrid fruit and vegetable varieties are created by cross breeding techniques; they are not genetically modified. Plant breeders first select the plants that produce a trait they want, such as a color, phytochemical, texture or taste. The pollen of the plant is transferred to the flower of another plant. The plant grows and bears seeds, which are planted. Out of this new batch, breeders select the plants with the desired trait and the process starts all over again, and again, and again. It's an experiment that spans years, with some varieties taking 10 to 20 years to get right, if at all.

Fruit/Vegetable	What It Is	Info/Taste	Its Healthy Insides*
pluot (also called dinosaur eggs)	plum + apricot (about 75% plum)	unusually sweet; smooth skinned	lycopene, anthocyanins, vitamin C
apriums	apricot + plum (about 75% apricot)	several varieties — bright orange/orange flesh; high sugar level	lycopene, beta carotene (form of vitamin A), vitamin C, potassium
nectaplum	nectarine + plum	looks like nectarine; juiciness/sweetness of plum	anthocyanins, lutein, vitamin C
peacharine	peach + nectarine (about half & half)	darker than typical peach, pale inside; little fuzz	lutein beta carotene, vitamin C, folate, potassium
nectacotum	apricot + plum + nectarine	plum taste; shape of nectarine	vitamin C, beta carotene; anthocyanins
peacotum	peach + apricot + plum	texture/juiciness of plum; outside like apricot	Anthocyanins, lutein, beta carotene, folate, potassium
broccoflower	broccoli + cauliflower	looks like green cauliflower; milder flavor than either of its parents	sulforaphane, lutein, quercetin; beta carotene, vitamins C and K, folate

\*selected; based on the fruits/vegetables from which they were developed.

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Hybrid fruits and vegetables are nothing new. Pretty much all produce sold today are hybrids, but typical hybrids are crosses within the same type of fruit or vegetable. Nature continuously produces hybrids, but they are generally within the same species or they don't produce seeds.

But even nature churns out some quirky hybrids that flourish. Take the rutabaga, for example. Sometime in the Middle Ages, the turnip and cabbage crossed and it took. This root vegetable contains qualities of both its parents, firmer than a turnip with a stronger flavor. The rutabaga provides sulforaphane and beta carotene, with a slightly higher amount of vitamin C than both the cabbage and turnip.

The varieties coming onto the market typically have names that hint at their parentage, such as the popular pluimcot (a combination of the plum and apricot) or the nectaplum (yes, nectarine and the plum). Then there's the pluot, which is heavier on the plum, and the aprium, containing more of the apricot.

Although vegetables can't boast as many unique crosses, broccoli has inspired a couple new variations. Broccoflower is a cross between broccoli and cauliflower; broccolini is a cross between Chinese kale and broccoli. Both have a different taste and look than the traditional cruciferous vegetables, but also contain broccoli's healthful compounds such as sulforaphane.

### Mixing It Up

If you're still hesitant on reaching for one of the new hybrids, here's some impetus. Scientists know that eating at least five to nine fruit and vegetables a day is linked with preventing such chronic illnesses as cancer and heart disease. Yet what research is also showing is that variety matters.

In one 2006 study, for example, researchers looked at the biological effect of eating a wide variety of fruits and vegetables compared to only a few. Participants were split into two groups; one set choosing from 18 types of fruits and vegetables and the other choosing from 5. Both groups ate from 8 to 10 servings. Yet only the people who ate a wide range of produce showed fewer signs linked to DNA damage and disease.

So enjoy some of the new hybrids, knowing you are taking in a blend of protective phytochemicals but also just because they are fun and tasty.

**Source: The American Institute for Cancer Research**

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## Tender Care for Towels

Houseguests give towels a big workout

Getting ready for summertime guests? You will probably stock the pantry and the refrigerator, but have you thought about the linen closet? Running out of clean towels is a sure way to put a damper on having overnight guests, cautions Nancy Brock, Vice President of Education at The Soap and Detergent Association.

If new towels are in order, look for those that provide optimum drying power. Terry-cloth towels with thick, dense loops on both sides – loops that are packed so closely that you can barely see the fabric base – will do the best job. If you prefer the fashion look of velour towels, you may find that they are slightly less absorbent. That's because the shearing process that creates the velour removes the top of the loops and shortens the fabric pile. If the user blots, rather than rubs, and uses the loop side of the towel, the difference will be unnoticeable. No matter which style you prefer, check the edges of the towel. They should be securely stitched and tightly woven.

Be sure there is a place for towels to dry thoroughly between uses. This may be the time to install additional hooks or towel bars in the bathroom. Discourage guests and family members from discarding damp towels in a hamper where mold and bacteria can grow.

When it is time to launder the towels, read and follow the directions on the care labels. Don't make assumptions about how your towels should be laundered. Some manufacturers do not recommend using any type of bleach, and some recommend a gentle wash cycle. Pouring detergent directly onto the towels may cause residue build-up that reduces softness. To avoid this, add detergent to the wash cycle before adding the towels. Using fabric softener is a matter of personal preference. It will slightly reduce absorbency, but many people feel this is offset by the softness it imparts to towels.

**Source: The Soap and Detergent Association, [www.cleaning101.com](http://www.cleaning101.com)**

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## Folic Acid Boosts Cognition in Older Adults

Dutch researchers have added another chapter to the continuing debate over whether folic acid supplements can sharpen the aging mind. Their conclusion: The nutrient does improve cognitive function in older adults.

Previous studies on the subject have been split, although most have suggested that folic acid supplementation in people with high levels of the amino acid homocysteine in the blood helps with cognitive function. Higher homocysteine levels are associated with an increased risk for cardiovascular disease and stroke and possibly also Alzheimer's disease.

The new study adds to the growing impression that adding folic acid can help brain functioning, at least in certain groups of people.

"We can certainly take away that folate is going to be beneficial for cognitive improvement when you have high homocysteine levels," said Maria Carrillo, director of medical and scientific relations at the Alzheimer's Association.

"This underscores the importance of B vitamins," added Richard Finnell, Regents Professor in the Center for Environmental and Genetic Medicine at Texas A&M's Health Science Center Institute of Biosciences and Technology at Houston. "They do more than protect babies against birth defects."

Folic acid, or folate, is a B vitamin probably best known for its role in helping to prevent neural-tube defects in newborns. But folic acid also has several other functions: It helps the body digest and utilize proteins and to synthesize new proteins when they are needed; it's essential for the production of red blood cells and the synthesis of DNA; it helps with tissue growth and cell function; it helps to increase appetite when needed; and it stimulates the formation of digestive acids.

Food sources of folate include beans and legumes; citrus fruits and juices; wheat bran and other whole grains; dark, green leafy vegetables; poultry; pork; shellfish and liver, according to the National Institutes of Health.

**Source: MedlinePlus**

## Opt-Out

Unsolicited calls, emails, and letters regarding “pre-screened” or “pre-approved” offers of credit have become an integral part of the marketing plan for many creditors/lenders, especially in the mortgage industry. Most consumers find themselves inundated with these solicitations soon after applying for a line of credit. Many even feel betrayed, wondering why this company was able to sell or share their personal information without their consent.

In essence, your recent credit application may have triggered this onslaught. The companies are able to identify potential customers for the products they offer through lists provided by one of the three consumer credit reporting agencies, and then market directly to them. Although the vast majority of consumers seem to be annoyed by this method of marketing, one must not overlook the potential benefits. Some of these offers of credit represent an opportunity that might not be available to the general public. These offers may also give consumers the ability to comparison shop, which may actually increase their buying power.

Fortunately for those who are annoyed by the practice, there is the ability to “opt-out” of receiving these offers. If you decide that you don’t want to receive prescreened offers of credit and insurance, you have two choices: opt-out of receiving them for five years, or opt-out of receiving them permanently. Call toll-free 1-888-5-OPT-OUT (567-8688) or visit [www.optoutprecreen.com](http://www.optoutprecreen.com) for details.

**Source: Florida Consumer E-Newsletter**

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## A New Twist to an Old Saying ...

*Beans, beans, the magical fruit! The more you eat, the more you ...  
may reduce your cholesterol.*

It may not be as catchy as the popular children’s rhyme, but beans (which are actually vegetables) may indeed be magical for your health. Rich in protein, calcium, phosphorus, folate and iron, popular dried beans include black beans, chickpeas, kidney beans, pink beans and pinto beans.

The 2005 *U.S. Dietary Guidelines for Americans* recommend eating 3 cups of dried beans per week to reduce your risk of heart disease by up to 16 percent. Most Americans eat about a third of this amount. Recent research shows eating one-half cup of pinto beans daily can reduce serum cholesterol by 8 percent.

Full of complex carbohydrates yet fat-free, beans can play a role in weight management by making you feel full without a lot of calories.

Beans are a great source of insoluble and soluble fiber, with 6 to 8 grams in a half-cup. They promote a healthy digestive tract, may reduce your risk of some types of cancer and can help control diabetes and maintain healthy blood glucose levels.

**Source: American Dietetic Association**

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## Eat Better the USDA Way, Mypyramid Menu Planner Hailed as Best in Class

The Mypyramid Menu Planner is the best meal and menu planner on the web today says the American Dietetic Association (ADA), the nation's largest organization of food and nutrition professionals. ADA President, Connie Diekman said, "There are a variety of on-line nutrition-related tools but the Mypyramid Menu Planner is one of the best over-all. Other planners may focus on calorie counting or other nutrients in the diet, but the Menu Planner places its focus on the food groups, helping consumers learn to develop a well-rounded eating plan. Additionally, the site provides the user with immediate feedback as each food entry is made. Because of its ease of use, the ADA recommends it for the individual who is trying to lose weight, the homemaker who is concerned about the diet of the family, elementary school to college age students, as well as registered dietitians and other nutrition professionals."

Dr. Brian Wansink, Executive Director of the USDA Center for Nutrition Policy and Promotion said, "We are extraordinarily proud of the Menu Planner after almost two and a half years of development and testing, and we appreciate the endorsement of ADA."

"The problem is this," Wansink continued. "We all believe we know what constitutes a healthy diet. But do we really? For instance, we know that an apple provides more nutrition than a doughnut. So, making a single comparison between foods is easy. The difficulty comes when we try to conceive of an overall healthy diet day after day. That's where the MyPyramid Menu Planner can be so helpful. Traditionally, those who were truly interested in monitoring their food intake kept a food diary writing down everything they ate. The Menu Planner makes this type of journaling easier, more accurate, and does the calculation automatically. We encourage everyone who is interested in achieving a healthful, balanced diet for themselves or their families to log onto the Menu Planner."

Nutrition professionals and the public can access the Menu Planner at: [www.mypyramid.gov](http://www.mypyramid.gov) and click on the new MyPyramid Menu Planner in the upper right corner.

To see a short video of Dr. Wansink discussing the Menu Planner, go to [www.mypyramid.gov](http://www.mypyramid.gov) and click on MyPyramid PodCasts under Spotlights. There are three ways to use the Planner. First, you can determine whether you are eating a balanced diet. Second, you can use it to determine what small dietary changes you have to make for you and your family. And third, you can use it as a shopping guide to determine what foods you need to buy the next time you go shopping.

**Source: U.S. Department of Agriculture, Center for Nutrition Policy and Promotion**

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## Catching a Few ZZZ's: Sleep and Teens

Only 20% of teens polled by the National Sleep Foundation reported getting the recommended 7.5 to 9.5 hours of sleep at night. Increasing school and work stress, peer pressure and demanding routines are several causes of their decreased sleep. Getting adequate sleep has been linked to increased learning and concentration, improved behavior and mood, better sport performance, higher energy level and more stable weight among the teen population.

Parental tips for a supportive sleep environment:

- Enforce sleep schedules. Especially as vacation ends and school begins again.
- Establish a nighttime routine. This excludes loud music, eating and exercise right before bedtime.
- Decrease caffeine consumption throughout the day.
- Discourage activities such as homework or watching TV from being done in bed. This should be a place for sleep only.
- Be a good role model and practice what you preach.
- Watch for sleep deprivation signs: trouble waking up in the morning, irritability, random falling asleep and sleeping for an extra long period.
- Encourage your teen to keep a sleep diary. This will help to pinpoint possible barriers in their nighttime sleep routine.

If the steps above do not increase sleep time and quality, consult an expert for further analysis.

**Source: Living Well in Florida, Gulf Coast Edition, University of Florida**

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# Florida Food Fare

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## Figs

**Description:** A native of western Asia and the Mediterranean area, the fig is one of the earliest fruits known to man. It is estimated that they have been around for at least 6,000 years. The fig, a member of the mulberry family, is one of the sweetest fruits when fully ripe. Figs are not generally grown commercially in Florida because they are so perishable, but rather enjoyed as a dooryard fruit. The common varieties in Florida include; Celeste, a small purplish-bronze to light brown fruit with closed "eye"; Brown Turkey, a moderate sized bronze fruit with medium "eye"; and Green Ischia, a green color with a closed "eye".

**Availability:** Fresh figs are available from June through October. They do not ship well so local fruit will most likely be found in the markets. Figs are sold dried and candied in the supermarket, particularly around the holidays.

**Nutritional Value:** Figs are high in dietary fiber and are a rich source of magnesium and potassium. They are also relatively high in vitamins A, B, and C and low in calories, about 50 calories each.

**Selection and Care:** Fresh figs must be fully ripe to be of good quality. Green ones will shrivel when cooked. Ripeness or maturity cannot be judged by size. A ripe fig is rather soft and varies in color according to variety. Pick just as the skin begins to break. Be careful not to bruise the fruit, as this will make it spoil very quickly. Avoid overripe figs detectable by their sour odor, a sign of fermentation. Fresh figs are highly perishable. Try to pick the fruit daily and either use or preserve it the same day for best quality and flavor. If you must store figs overnight, place in a single layer in a shallow container in the coldest part of the refrigerator. For longer storage, fresh figs may be frozen for up to 6 months.

**Preparation and Use:** To use figs, remove the stem ends and halve, chop or slice, according to your recipe. Because their skins are edible, figs do not require peeling. Figs are a favorite breakfast fruit, and make a delightfully sweet addition to appetizers, salads or desserts. Because figs are high in pectin, they are ideal for jams and preserves.

### Stuffed Figs Appetizer

4 ounces Neufchatel cheese

1/4 teaspoon paprika

Skim or lowfat milk to moisten 12 large figs

1/3 cup nuts

1/3 cup celery, chopped

Lettuce, chopped

Soften cheese with milk to make a paste. Add nuts, celery and paprika. Mix, remove stems from figs. Cut in half lengthwise. Scoop out some of inside and fill cavity with cheese mixture. Arrange 3 stuffed figs on lettuce and serve cold as an appetizer or salad. Yield 4 servings.