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To: Caswell ECA Club Members

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## Some Food for Thought Newsletter Spring 2015

### Greetings!



I hope everyone has enjoyed a smooth transition from winter to spring and are enjoying the warmer days. The saying goes that "April showers bring May flowers", so we shall see. I know many of you are enjoying the great therapeutic benefits of working in your beautiful gardens this time of year. If you have any questions, please give me a call at (336) 694-4158 or email me at [sonya\\_patterson@ncsu.edu](mailto:sonya_patterson@ncsu.edu). Be sure to visit the Extension website at [caswell.ces.ncsu.edu](http://caswell.ces.ncsu.edu) or our Facebook page for updates and additional information.

### North Central District Day

The North Central District Day event will be held on Thursday, April 30<sup>th</sup> at the Forsyth County Extension Center in Winston Salem. Please save the date and plan to attend. If you were awarded a

"blue ribbon" in the county level Cultural Arts contest, this is your chance to advance your item(s) to the district level competition. If you are awarded a "blue ribbon" at the district level, your item(s) will be eligible to advance to the state competition that will take place at the ECA State Meeting that will be held in October. The District Day registration information is enclosed with your newsletter.

### ECA Garden Party

The annual ECA Garden Party will be held on Thursday, May 21<sup>st</sup> from 12:00 noon – 2:00 pm in the kitchen of the Agriculture Building. All club members and their guests are invited to attend. Please bring a covered dish and a plant for the plant exchange. An educational program will be presented.



## **What to Eat This Spring**

In the US, we enjoy practically unlimited access to any food any time of the year. Although it's nice to have watermelon in February and asparagus in August, many people don't even know that foods have a season, let alone what foods are in season at any given time of the year.

But in the food world, local is the new exotic. Farmer's markets are popping up in more neighborhoods as consumers are realizing the benefits of eating food that was grown within miles of their mouths. Local food boasts a host of benefits, including better flavor, higher nutritional value, and less environmental burden. It's healthier for you because you get the higher nutrient levels from just-picked produce. It's healthier for the environment because local food uses less fossil fuel for transport. It tastes better because it really is fresh (not shipped from across the country, yet still bearing a label that says fresh). And it's also interesting, as each season brings a new crop of foods that you haven't had for an entire year. Before you've had a chance to tire of its bounty, the season changes to bring new, flavorful foods.

If you want to eat healthy, home-cooked meals without all the fuss, try a seasonal pantry makeover! To do it, stock up on locally-grown foods. A fun trip to your closest farmer's market will yield the majority of ingredients you need. Simply create meals based on what's in season in your region.

Availability will vary from region to region, but here's a list of foods that make spring their season, along with tips on how to incorporate the new-to-you ingredients into your meals.

**Artichokes.** A perfect springtime appetizer, serve artichokes that have been boiled until tender (about an hour) with homemade garlic butter for dipping. Or add cooked artichokes to pasta sauce, pizza or salads.

**Asparagus.** Although you can pick up asparagus at the supermarket any time of the year, it never tastes as good as freshly-harvested springtime asparagus. Grill, steam, braise, and sprinkle with some kosher salt for a simple side-dish.

**Carrots.** Pair them with peanut butter for a quick and healthy midday snack, or make a side dish like glazed carrots for a gourmet dinner.

**Collards.** Abundant spring through fall, this dark leafy green is the main ingredient in famous southern green recipes. Collards are also a rich source of calcium.

**Fennel.** Fennel slightly resembles celery, with a bulbous base, which is the part that you eat. Chop into small spears and sauté in olive oil and minced garlic until tender, then sprinkle with minced fresh parsley and cook a minute more.

**Morels.** These wild mushrooms are so treasured, there's even a website dedicated to morel "hunting", complete with message boards and photos of people's finds. Morels are delicious sautéed or roasted, and boast a nutty, meaty flavor and a rich and creamy texture.

**Mustard Greens.** High in antioxidants and vitamins K and A, these dark leafy greens are as nutritious as they are flavorful. The raw leaves can be added to salads or steamed or boiled until tender.



## **What to Eat this Spring**

Continued

**New Potatoes.** Although they can be mashed, these springtime babies are best roasted or boiled and topped with a pat of butter and some kosher salt to accentuate their fresh flavor.

**Rhubarb.** Most famous for its part in rhubarb pie, this perennial vegetable can be cooked and pureed to make a sweet sauce, or even used to make oatmeal-rhubarb bars. Just make sure you don't eat the leaves, which are toxic.

**Spinach.** Mix with baby lettuce for an exceptional salad, or sauté with garlic to make a delicious side dish.



### **Spring Fruits**

Fruit is always easy. It is ready to eat, and tastes great. But if you're looking for some new ways to incorporate fruit into your menu besides the "grab and bite" technique, try fruit smoothies, fruit cobblers and fruit-topped pancakes and French toast.

**Apricots.** These delectable and delicate fruits are delicious fresh, cooked into a sauce, or grilled. Get them while you can, because they don't last long!

**Strawberries.** Strawberry shortcake, strawberry smoothies, strawberries a la mode...the possibilities are endless.

**Avocado.** Avocados are an excellent source of healthy unsaturated fats, but many people don't know what to do with them outside of whipping up some guacamole. Try them sliced on a sandwich, or cubed into salads. Just remember that they don't keep well, so try to use them immediately.

### **Spring Seasoning**

If you've done a little cooking, you already know that the seasonings can make the meal. Here are some seasonal seasonings for your spring suppers.

- Chives
- Cilantro
- Dill
- Mint
- Oregano
- Parsley
- Sage
- Rosemary
- Watercress



If your pantry isn't stocked with the season's tastiest and most nutritious staples, then get yourself to your local farmer's market and add flavor to your meals with the best spring seasonings. Enjoy the bounty of spring!

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

## **The Country Store Market**

Caswell County's Local Foods Council is pleased to announce the opening of its first official farmers market in the county. The market will be located at the Semora Storage Company at 4807 Hwy 57 North in Semora. The market will open on April 25<sup>th</sup> and will run through September 26<sup>th</sup>. It will be open each Saturday from 4:00 to 7:00 pm. If you or anyone you know would like vendor information, please call Tammy at (336) 234-7561. For more information, visit us online: [www.facebook.com/LocalFoodInCaswell](http://www.facebook.com/LocalFoodInCaswell).



## **The Benefits of Getting Outside for Elders and Caregivers**

Enjoying a breezy spring day or the warm summer temperatures don't have to be a distant memory for elders and caregivers. After being cooped up in the house for possibly months at a time, senior adults can breathe in the fresh air, even if they are experiencing mobility problems. It takes some advance planning and choosing an activity that won't seem like a chore, but it's worth getting out of the house, for you and your elderly parent.

A main advantage of heading outdoors, even for a short period of time, is being able to soak up the sunlight, which generates Vitamin D – necessary for the brain, bones and muscle function. Some doctors even prescribe sunlight as a source of Vitamin D, which research also finds can improve cognitive function.

Another key benefit is that being outside enables elders to socialize and interact with caregivers as well as other adults, children and animals.

Although caregivers may be aware of the benefits, sometimes it seems as if the obstacles, such as wheelchair access, bathroom access, frailty and fatigue are too great to overcome the great outdoors.

Caregivers can start to prepare elders with mobility problems to take the steps to head outside. Your physician can suggest chair exercises to make them more stable and build their muscles.

Even though the temperatures may be pleasant, it's important to make sure an elderly family member stays well

hydrated, if not, it can impact muscle function and blood pressure and lead to a dangerous situation.

### **Types of outdoor activities**

Instead of being overwhelmed by the potential challenges, focus on activities and interests that you and the elderly person you're caring for enjoy.

- 1. Catch a sporting event.** The events could be watching a grandchild's soccer game, which are not all-day events, or attending a professional game, like baseball.
- 2. Fish for Fun.** For folks who enjoy fishing, you can cast a rod from a pier or other location, even if someone is wheelchair bound.
- 3. Take a dip.** For some folks, it may just be putting a foot in the pool, while others may be able to handle low-impact water aerobics.
- 4. Stroll around.** If a walk is possible, start slow. Try walking three or four minutes in one direction, turning around and coming back.
- 5. Be a bird lover.** If you have a bird house, bird feeder or bird bath in your yard, checking on those daily give elderly individuals a reason to go outside.
- 6. Go fly a kite.** Head to a park or beach and get a kite soaring. Let an elderly individual take control, which they can do while sitting down. If children are around, they can get involved by trying to keep the kite in the air.
- 7. Picnic Outdoors.** Picnics are another park or playground activity. Elderly individuals can watch children run around or enjoy the buzz of outdoor activity.



## **The Benefits of Getting Outside for Elders and Caregivers**

Continued

8. **Celebrate the holidays.** From Memorial Day concerts to Fourth of July fireworks, there are plenty of community events this spring and summer with opportunities for elders to get out and be part of the crowd.
9. **Board games and puzzles.** Not only are games enjoyable from an entertainment standpoint, but they also promote social interactions. Alzheimer's, Parkinson's and dementia patients see great benefit in exercising their minds. Board games are great for folks with mobility issues as well.
10. **Gardening.** Gardening is another fantastic outdoor activity for elderly patients and people. Whether it be a quick stroll through the garden to enjoy the sights and sounds, or really working on that green thumb, it's a great way to enjoy being outside.

Source: [agingcare.com](http://agingcare.com)



## **Recipe Corner**

### **Strawberry Bread**

#### **Ingredients**

- 2 cups fresh strawberries
- 3 $\frac{1}{8}$  cups all-purpose flour
- 2 cups white sugar
- 1 tablespoon ground cinnamon
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1 teaspoon baking soda
- 1 $\frac{1}{4}$  cups vegetable oil
- 4 eggs, beaten
- 1 $\frac{1}{4}$  cups chopped pecans

#### **Directions:**

1. Preheat oven to 350 degrees F (175 degrees C). Butter and flour two 9x5 inch loaf pans.
2. Slice strawberries and place in medium-sized bowl. Sprinkle lightly with sugar, and set aside while preparing batter.
3. Combine flour, sugar, cinnamon, salt and baking soda in large bowl, mix well. Blend oil and eggs into strawberries. Add strawberry mixture to flour mixture, blending until dry ingredients are just moistened. Stir in pecans. Divide batter into pans.
4. Bake in preheated oven until tester inserted in the center comes out clean, 45-50 minutes (test each loaf separately). Let cool in pans on wire rack for 10 minutes. Turn loaves out of pans, and allow to cool before slicing.

Source: [allrecipes.com](http://allrecipes.com)