

>>the kids' table

field trips to local markets

Albertsons grocery chain has launched a new program that offers school kids a field trip to local stores to learn about healthy



eating habits. The Albertsons Healthy Eaters™ program was designed to reinforce the nutrition and health curricula taught in schools by taking the children on supermarket tours. Elementary-school children get hands-on instruction in food labels, proper portion sizes, nutrients and how to make good eating decisions. Currently the program is available in eight Western states. For more information, visit www.fieldtripfactory.com.

>>food focus

the treats of tropical fruits

Just biting into a tropical fruit like a papaya or a mango can transport you to a sunny oasis in your mind. Each morsel feels like a vacation from the doldrums of winter. But that's only part of the picture: tropical fruits are also teeming with fiber, vitamins and minerals. Here's a look at some of the season's best bets:



Papaya. This golden-yellow fruit is a good source of fiber (2.5 grams per cup) and vitamins A and C. Buy fruit that is already soft and ripe; use as soon as possible. *Tip:* Grind the peppery tasting seeds, and add to salad dressings.

Pineapple. Pineapples are also a good source of fiber (2.2 g per cup) and rich in vitamin C. Choose fruit that is slightly soft to the touch. Refrigerated pineapple will keep for up to 3 days if kept in plastic wrap. *Tip:* Try grilling sliced pineapple.

Mango. Each cup of mango packs a good dose of vitamin A. Select fruit that has a smooth, yellow skin with a hint of red. Refrigerate ripe mangoes up to 5 days. *Tip:* Purée mango, and add to salad dressings or chutneys.



Star Fruit. Packed with fiber (3 g per cup), the fruit at its sweetest has a bright, even color and broad ribs on the outside. Store in the refrigerator for up to 1 week. *Tip:* Use slices as a healthy garnish for frothy summer fruit drinks or cocktails.



Kiwifruit. Also known as Chinese gooseberry, kiwis are a good source of vitamin C and fiber (2.3 g each). Pick fruit that yields a bit to pressure. Kiwis can keep in the refrigerator for up to 3 weeks. *Tip:* Add peeled slices to a spinach salad.



Kumquat. Kumquats are loaded with potassium and vitamins A and C; the best fruit are firm and unblemished. Keep refrigerated and wrapped in a plastic bag for up to 1 month. *Tip:* Dip whole, ripe kumquats in melted chocolate for a decadent summertime treat.



Source: March 2007 *Cooking Light*.

>>ask the RD



You can pose your own question to our contributing editor Jennie McCary, MS, RD, LD, a registered dietitian and the wellness coordinator for the Albuquerque Public School District. She chairs Action for Healthy Kids in New Mexico and also teaches nutrition at the University of New Mexico. Please send your questions, along with your name and city/state/country, to senior editor Diane Lofshult at dlofshult@ideafit.com.

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Is it harder to digest grains as you get older?

The older you get, the more common it is to have trouble digesting many common types of foods that you used to enjoy on a regular basis. Grains are no exception to this rule. As we age, our bodies become less efficient and cannot produce enough gastric acid and enzymes to digest certain foods properly. As a result, some people lose their ability to digest fat, carbohydrates or lactose.

If whole grains cause you discomfort, don't cut them out entirely, as they are a good source of energy, fiber, minerals and several B vitamins. Instead, look for types of grain that may be easier to digest, such as spelt, quinoa, millet, brown rice and oats.

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