



Ask the Expert: What are Tips to Grow my Own Produce?

Written by Kaitlan Tracy, Purdue University Nutrition and
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Growing your own produce can be a great way to save money on food and have an ongoing supply of healthy food. There are many ways to begin growing your own food. Here are a few tips to get started:

1. Choose the plants you want to grow. Each kind of plant might need different amounts of water, sunlight and soil type to successfully grow. It is important to make sure the conditions and time you have fit with the kind of plants you want to grow. The USDA Plant Hardiness Zone Map, can help you chose plants that will work the best for your environment. Here is a list of easy-to-grow items that are great plants to start out with:

-bell peppers, blackberries, raspberries, cabbage, cucumbers, garlic, strawberries, tomatoes, zucchini, and squash

2. Think about your growing space. If you want to grow an indoor garden, choose somewhere in your home or space that gets plenty of sunlight. If you wish to grow an outdoor garden, consider doing a soil test to make sure that the soil is not contaminated and can support plant life. The soil should get sunlight for most of the day. Plants can be grown in containers or directly in the ground. In both indoor and outdoor spaces, it is important to have vertical room, so your plants can grow up.

3. Buy the seeds. There are many places to buy seeds for a low price. The **Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) allows benefits to be used to purchase seeds and edible plants.** According to the US Department of Agriculture, for every dollar spent on seeds up to \$25 dollars' worth of produce can be grown. This allows participants to double their food supply and spend food dollars on other items, like foods that may not normally be purchased. To find a SNAP retailer near you, follow this link: <https://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/retailer-locator>

4. Map out your garden. Mapping out the garden is important to make sure each plant has enough room to grow successfully. Food Print gives an example of a food map with information on plant spacing. Learn more about proper plant growth when growing your own garden: <https://www.smartgardener.com/>

Community gardens are a great place to start your gardening journey. "Growing Together", a project led by Purdue University SNAP-Ed and the Extension Master Garden Program, has partnered with local food pantries to grow community gardens. The fresh produce grown in the garden was given to local senior citizens who, because of the coronavirus pandemic, had limited food supply. This project is an example of how growing produce can benefit the community as well as individuals.

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Food Safety: Power Outages

Written by Allyson Gray, Purdue University Nutrition and Dietetics & Fitness and Health 2025

Spring and summer weather is finally here! Spring showers and summer storms are part of our Indiana weather, so it is important to be prepared for power outages that may happen in this weather. Check out ways to prepare for a power outage below:

Preparation

- Double check that your refrigerator is set **below 40 degrees Fahrenheit**. This decreases the likelihood of food spoiling during an outage.
- Keep shelf stable or single-serving foods on hand. For example:
 - o Cereal, granola bars, breads
 - o Carrots, grapes, whole fruit
 - o Peanut butter, nuts

When the Power is Out

- Reduce the number of times the fridge and freezer are opened.
- If the outage only lasts four hours or less, the food inside should be safe to eat.

When the Power Comes Back On

- Check the temperature of your fridge! If it is 45 degrees Fahrenheit or above, throw away any foods that could be spoiled. Some foods to watch out for are:
 - o Meats and fish
 - o Dairy and eggs
 - o Cooked beans, rice, or potatoes
- Make sure to wait until the fridge temperature has dropped back down to 40 degrees Fahrenheit or lower before restocking!

Source: <https://www.eatright.org/homefoodsafety/four-steps/refrigerate/food-safety-during-power-outages>

Skillet Pasta Dinner

Directions

1. Cook the ground meat until brown with onion and garlic in a skillet or saucepan. Drain any grease.
2. Add tomatoes, tomato sauce, water, and uncooked pasta
3. Cover the skillet or saucepan with a lid and simmer for 10 minutes.
4. Add the fresh or frozen vegetables, stir together, and cook for about 10 minutes until the pasta and vegetables are tender.

Ingredients (6 servings)

- 1/2 pound ground turkey (or ground sausage or ground beef*)
- 1 onion, chopped
- 2 garlic cloves, minced
- 1 can tomato/spaghetti sauce* (8 oz)
- 1 cup water
- 8 oz uncooked pasta*
- 2 cups fresh or frozen vegetables (for example zucchini, spinach*, or carrots*)



Nutrition Facts (per serving)

Calories: 308 Protein: 1g
Carbs: 47g
Fat: 6g

***foods included in the TEFAP (The Emergency Food Assistance Program)**

Sources: <https://www.myplate.gov/recipes/supplemental-nutrition-assistance-program-snap/skillet-pasta-dinner>, <https://www.fns.usda.gov/tefap/usda-foods-available-list-tefap>

Eating Right: Family Mealtime

Written by Adina Miller, Purdue University Dietetics & Nutrition, Fitness, and Health '24

Family mealtime can be a great place to start teaching children about food and making healthy habits. For example, teaching children that food is the fuel for their bodies and brain. **Here are some ideas for making family mealtime an enjoyable social time as well as a healthy time:**

- Eat a variety of foods and food groups. Try different flavors from different cultures!
- Make mealtimes a comfortable atmosphere where the family can talk to each other. Try avoiding distractions like phones, so everyone can be present in the moment.
- Make a healthy habit of washing hands before and after eating.
- Let children choose how much to eat based on their hunger cues.

Family mealtimes allow families to spend quality time together, talking to each other while enjoying food. Setting aside time to eat meals together can lead to benefits, such as making family unity stronger. Getting children involved in nutrition is important, because it can help them to make healthy choices when they are older, and it may help them to be more aware of the benefits to good nutrition.

Here are some more tips for getting kids involved in nutrition:

- When you are in the grocery store, teach children the different categories of food groups. Such as: grains, fruits, vegetables, dairy, and protein.
- Another thing to do in the grocery store, is allow your children to pick a new fruit or vegetable to try.
- In your own kitchen, older children can help pick meals to cook. Then, they can help choose the ingredients at the grocery store for the meals.
- Growing or visiting a garden, can also introduce children to the process of planting fruits or vegetables.





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This newsletter is edited by Adina Miller and Heather A. Eicher-Miller, PhD and is created by the Eicher-Miller Lab in the Department of Nutrition Science at Purdue University. This institution is an equal opportunity provider.

In The News: Food Bank Events in June

Written by Alexis Noiro, Junior in Developmental and Family Sciences, Purdue University '22

Since school is out for the summer, finding reliable meal assistance can be difficult. More than 55,000 children and adolescents in Northwest Indiana are dependent on federal Lunch and Breakfast Programs during the school year (<https://foodbanknwi.org>). Several events in June will offer food assistance to children and families.

Food Finders Food Bank, Inc.

In Northwestern Indiana, there is a foodbank distribution day at *Titan Construction*, 2675 N. McKinley Avenue, Rensselaer, IN 47978 on June 4th at 10 am. Find similar Food Finders events at : <https://www.food-finders.org/events/>.

The Foodbank of Northwest Indiana

The Food Bank of Northwest Indiana hosts summer hunger programs to stop hunger including:

- *Summer Food Service Program (SFSP)*: provides breakfast and lunch to children and youth under 18 years of age. Learn more at: <https://www.in.gov/doi>.
- *Pantry Pack*: 25 pounds of monthly groceries for food insecure individuals.

Serving children and youth through the YMCA, YWCA, Everybody Counts, and other organizations. Contact Chanda Dixon to learn more about these summer programs at cdixon@foodbanknwi.org, or 219-980-1777.

On June 12th from 2-5pm, the Food Bank of Northwest Indiana will raise funds for seniors, children, and other individuals facing hunger in Indiana. You can register to participate in the evening's festivities with live music, restaurants, raffles, auctions and more by emailing Amy McDunn at amcdunn@foodbanknwi.org or visiting the website, <https://foodbanknwi.org/events/>.

Richmond VA Clinic

On Tuesday June 28th at 9am a food bank will be open for all veterans at the Richmond (IN) Veterans Association Clinic, 1010 North J Street, Richmond, IN 47374. This monthly Free Veterans Food Pantry is open to the public. Learn more at: <https://local.aarp.org/event/free-veterans-food-pantry-2022-06-28-richmond-in.html>. or call 765-983-2183

For any additional opportunities, be sure to check out Indiana's website for Child & Adult Care Food Programs: <https://www.in.gov/doi/nutrition/child-and-adult-care-food-program/>.



Image source: <https://bloximages.chicago2.vip.townnews.com/nwitimes.com/content/tncms/assets/v3/editorial/b/34/b34faa8f-0434-57f3-8616-6107c026848d/5496102312348.image.jpg>