



NEWS RELEASE

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Focus on fruit and vary your veggies

*By Kay Blakley,
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FORT LEE, Va. – Are you eating your fruits and veggies like you should? If so, count yourself among a small and elite group. According to a recent industry-sponsored study, just 12 percent of Americans eat the recommended 2 cups of fruit and 2 ½ cups of vegetables daily. USDA's Economic Research Service drills it down a little further, finding that, on average, we consume only half the amount we need from each of these important food groups.

If you're not a fruit and veggie lover yet, here are a few reasons why you'll want to turn over a new leaf – a good, dark green leaf like romaine would be a tasty start. Sorry, I just couldn't resist.

Seriously, fruits and vegetables provide an abundance of the nutrients a healthy body needs, like vitamins, minerals, dietary fiber, water, and healthful phytonutrients. That last mouthful of a word simply means health-protecting compounds like beta-carotene (think carrots) and lycopene (think tomatoes) and a few others.

Some fruits and veggies are good sources of vitamin A, while others are rich in vitamin C. Some supply a good amount of folate, which is very important for women of child-bearing age, or potassium, which plays a role in maintaining normal blood pressure. Eating a wide variety of fruits and vegetables helps to ensure that you'll get some of all of these healthy qualities.

Nearly all fruits and vegetables are naturally low in fat and calories and none have cholesterol. All of these healthy attributes may protect you from getting chronic diseases, such as heart disease, stroke and some types of cancer.

Finally, for a practical and quickly noticeable reason, they provide a very tasty way to shed extra pounds, and continued consumption will help to keep those pounds at bay.

Are you convinced yet? Here's a recipe for a marvelous salad to get you started. You'll notice it contains both fruits and veggies, and both canned and fresh versions of each. The nutrient value of fresh, frozen and canned fruits and vegetables is comparable, so you don't always have to stick with just one version.

If you're strictly counting calories, you could do much better with a salad that didn't rely on a mayonnaise dressing, but changing habits comes in small steps. If it takes a little mayo to convince your taste buds that fruits and veggies taste good, don't worry about it for now. Make it a long term goal to learn to love them in their plain, low-calorie state, and know that the more fruits and veggies you try, the sooner you'll reach that goal.

Ruthie's Layer Salad (Serves 8)

- 1 ½ to 2 cups celery, finely diced
- 5 hard-boiled eggs, sliced
- 8 slices ham, cut into small dice
- 1 can of shoe peg corn, drained
- 1 can crushed pineapple, drained
- 2 large apples, thinly sliced
- 1 small jar of mayonnaise or salad dressing
- 1 large leek, white part only, cut in thin rings

1. Layer ingredients in a large bowl, in the same sequence as written.
2. Chill several hours or overnight before serving.

- DeCA-

About DeCA: *The Defense Commissary Agency operates a worldwide chain of commissaries providing groceries to military personnel, retirees and their families in a safe and secure shopping environment. Authorized patrons purchase items at cost plus a 5-percent surcharge, which covers the costs of building new commissaries and modernizing existing ones. Shoppers save an average of more than 30 percent on their purchases compared to commercial prices – savings worth about \$3,400 annually for a family of four. A core military family support*

element, and a valued part of military pay and benefits, commissaries contribute to family readiness, enhance the quality of life for America's military and their families, and help recruit and retain the best and brightest men and women to serve their country.