NEWS RELEASE

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Check out your commissary's produce department for delicious springtime favorites

By Kay Blakley,
DeCA home economist

FORT LEE, Va. – Your commissary's produce department should be bursting at the seams right about now with all manner of marvelous spring fruits and vegetables. No doubt, you've already sampled a few strawberries, but have you used them in a spinach salad? That's right! Strawberries and spinach make a delicious combo, as you'll see in one of this week's featured recipes – Strawberry-Kiwi-Spinach Toss. It's an entire meal all by itself, and weighs in at less than 200 calories. That's skinny enough to sneak in an indulgent dessert, I'd say.

If you're familiar with fresh rhubarb, you already know what a treat it is each spring. If not, give it a try with the Easy Rhubarb Crisp recipe. In case you need a clue on how to identify it – look for large stalks that resemble stalks of celery, but are pink to deep red in color.

If you're a fan of mashed potatoes and gravy, try the Creamed New Potatoes with Onions recipe. The term "new potatoes" simply refers to immature potatoes harvested in the spring and early summer. They have a high moisture content, which makes a gummy mess if you try to mash them, but steam, boil or roast them, and their prized creamy texture shines through. They don't keep as well as more mature potatoes, so use them within a few days of purchasing.

Asparagus is one of the first fresh vegetables to come into season the minute spring arrives. Choose the freshest-looking spears you can find – ones with smooth, tender skin, compact, tightly closed pointed tips, and cut ends that are not overly dry. Take them straight home and refrigerate as soon as possible, as spear toughening occurs rapidly at room

temperature. Once you've had your fill of steamed, boiled, sautéed, stir-fried, grilled or even microwaved asparagus, try the Creamy Asparagus Soup recipe. You won't be disappointed.

As always, get the ingredients at your local commissary — where you'll save 30 percent or more — and look for these super recipes below and more in Kay's Kitchen at http://www.commissaries.com for easy-to-prepare ideas to turn your next meal into a delicious feast.

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Strawberry-Kiwi-Spinach Toss (Serves 4-6)

This meal-size salad is so flavorful and satisfying, you'd never dream it has only about 160 calories. Make it now, while springtime strawberries are plentiful.

4 cups (about 1 pound) fresh spinach, washed, dried and torn into bite-size pieces
½ pint strawberries, stemmed and halved (about 1 cup)
3 kiwi, peeled and cut into bite-size pieces
1/3 cup broken pecans
1/3 cup julienne strips Gouda or Edam cheese (about 2 ounces)
2 tablespoons juice from 1 lime
2 tablespoons honey
1 tablespoons vegetable oil
½ teaspoon grated fresh gingerroot, substitute ¼ teaspoon ground ginger, if desired

1. In a large bowl, toss together spinach, strawberries, kiwi, pecans and cheese.
2. Place lime juice, honey, vegetable oil and gingerroot in a tightly covered container, and shake until smooth.
3. Pour dressing over salad, toss gently until evenly coated and serve.

Nutrient analysis: Per serving – 160 calories, 10 grams total fat, (2 grams saturated fat), 10 milligrams cholesterol, 160 milligrams sodium, 16 grams carbohydrate, 4 grams protein.

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Easy Rhubarb Crisp (Serves 4)

Fresh rhubarb is wonderful in this dish, but frozen, chopped rhubarb can also be substituted, if desired.

4 cups chopped, fresh rhubarb
3 tablespoons orange juice
1 tablespoon cornstarch
½ teaspoon cinnamon
1 tablespoon cold butter, cut into small pieces
¼ cup melted butter
1/3 cup brown sugar
2/3 cup all-purpose flour
Dash salt
¼ teaspoon baking soda

2/3 cup quick-cooking rolled oats
Ice cream or whipped topping for serving

1. Preheat oven to 375 degrees. Lightly coat an 8-inch square baking dish with cooking spray.
2. In a small bowl, stir orange juice and cornstarch together until smooth
3. Place chopped rhubarb into baking dish; pour orange juice mixture over rhubarb and toss until evenly coated. Sprinkle with granulated sugar and cinnamon; dot with cold butter pieces.
4. In a large bowl, stir together the melted butter and brown sugar.
5. In a separate bowl, combine the flour, salt and baking soda until well blended; stir in the rolled oats.
6. Combine the flour mixture with the butter and brown sugar mixture until well blended; spread evenly over rhubarb.
7. Bake for 40 minutes, or until topping is crisp and golden brown and rhubarb filling is bubbly.
8. Serve warm, with ice cream or whipped topping.

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Creamed New Potatoes with Onions (Serves 4)

No need for gravy with these potatoes – the hearty sauce is built right in!

12 small new potatoes, scrubbed clean and unpeeled
2 teaspoons salt, divided
2 bunches green onions, cut into 1½-inch pieces (about 2 cups)
1 tablespoon butter
1 tablespoon all-purpose flour
1/8 teaspoon pepper
1 cup milk

1. Place potatoes in a medium saucepan with cold water to cover by about an inch, and 1 teaspoon salt. Cover, bring to a boil over medium-high heat and cook for 10 minutes.
2. Add green onions and cook until tender, about 4 minutes; drain well.
3. Meanwhile, melt butter in a small saucepan over low heat. Stir in flour, 1 teaspoon salt and pepper.
4. Stirring constantly, gradually add milk. Continue cooking and stirring until sauce is thickened.
5. Remove potatoes and onions to a serving dish; top with sauce and serve.

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Creamy Asparagus Soup (Serves 4)

2 tablespoons butter
1 leek, thinly sliced, or ½ cup diced onion
2 tablespoons flour
2 cups chicken broth
1 pound asparagus, trimmed and chopped
2 tablespoons chopped fresh parsley, plus extra for garnish
1 cup heavy cream
Salt and pepper

1. In a medium saucepan, over medium-low heat, cook leeks or onions in butter until tender, but not brown.

2. Stir in flour until well incorporated. Add chicken broth, chopped asparagus and 2 tablespoons chopped parsley.
3. Bring mixture to a boil, stirring constantly. Reduce heat to low, cover and simmer for 15 minutes, or until asparagus is tender.
4. Use an immersion blender to process mixture until smooth, or working in 2-cup batches, process until smooth in a food processor.
5. Return mixture to the saucepan, stir in cream and heat through, but do not boil.
6. Season to taste with salt and pepper.
7. Ladle into bowls, garnish with chopped parsley and serve.

-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 $3,300 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.*