Simple side dishes can make summer eating fun

K-State food scientist shares tips for boosting summer meals

MANHATTAN, Kan. – Kansas State University food scientist Karen Blakeslee says summer foods open a window for consumers to be creative with side dishes to complement foods – and save a few dollars at the same time.

And it’s a good time for that. Blakeslee noted that as the COVID-19 pandemic continued, consumer research indicated a rise in ready-to-use meals, precooked meats and frozen side dishes to make home food preparation easier and quicker. More than half of U.S. households (55%) bought frozen side dishes twice a week, studies showed.

Those options can be costly, so Blakeslee suggests using foods of the season to create fun side dishes for summer meals.

“Some easy side dishes are any kind of fresh salsa, fruit or vegetable kabobs and grilled vegetables,” she said. “And, who can resist fresh corn on the cob?”

Grilling options? “Put a mix of chopped vegetables and herbs in a foil packet and pop it on the grill as you are cooking your meat,” Blakeslee said. “Use healthful fats, minimal salt and season with herbs to add flavor to many foods.”

A cool – and simple – option could be adding fruit to plain yogurt and eating as is, “or transform it into freezer pops,” Blakeslee said.

“Side dishes do not need to be complicated,” she added. “A little creativity can create a tasty meal. Include the family in preparation to practice food preparation skills and they will be more apt to find a new favorite food.”

Blakeslee is the coordinator of the Rapid Response Center for food science at Kansas State University. In that role, she publishes a monthly newsletter called You Asked It! that provides numerous tips on being safe and healthy.
FOR PRINT PUBLICATIONS: Links used in this story
Rapid Response Center for food science, https://www.rrc.k-state.edu
You Asked It! monthly newsletter, https://www.rrc.k-state.edu/newsletter

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