Summer is a great time to access affordable, great tasting fresh produce, but purchasing that produce for your children or grandchildren without letting it go to waste can be tricky. Establishing a love for fruits and vegetables while your children are young will benefit their health now and in the future. A diet high in colorful fruits and vegetables will provide a variety of vitamins, minerals and fiber that children need to grow. Studies show that eating fruits and vegetables can help your child maintain a healthy weight, keep bowels regular and decrease the chance of diseases like heart disease and cancer.

However, getting kids excited about fruits and vegetables can be a challenge. You may offer fruits and vegetables at mealtimes but your child refuses. If you have a picky eater who won’t touch a plate with leafy greens or an unfamiliar vegetable, you may be wondering what to do. Try these tips:

- At the grocery store, let children pick their own fruit or vegetable.
  - For variety, try a different color each week.
  - Or fill the shopping basket with a fruit or vegetable from every color in the rainbow.

- Let them play with their food. Use slices, dices, pieces and whole fruits and vegetables to be creative.
  - Make colorful, funny fruit and vegetable faces. Make a game out of it (who can make the funniest face) and then eat them together.
  - Make an edible landscape. For example, use a banana slice as the sunshine, broccoli as trees, leafy greens for grass, etc.
  - Give fruits and vegetables a funny name.

- Let children help prepare fruits and vegetables. They can:
  - Wash fruits and vegetables before cooking or eating
  - Snap the peas or break apart the broccoli
  - Tear the lettuce for salads and sandwich
  - Measure the vegetables before cooking
  - Peel fruits and vegetables
  - Slice soft vegetables with a plastic knife

- Read books about fruits and vegetables with your child.

- Introduce children to gardening to teach them how fruits and vegetables grow. Plant seeds together and watch them grow.

- Set a good example — eat and enjoy fruits and vegetables with your child.

- Have your child eat with another child who loves fruits and vegetables.

Start now to establish a lifetime of healthy eating habits for your children!

Source: University of Missouri Extension, *Getting Kids to Eat Fruits and Vegetables*. For more information on nutrition, food safety, health, or family and child development contact the Marais des Cygnes Extension District Paola (913-294-4306) or Mound City (913-795-2829) offices, or write to fmeastwo@ksu.edu or check out our website: www.maraisdescygnes.k-state.edu