



News Release

For Immediate Release:
Tuesday, December 12, 2000

Contact:
Susannah Derbenwick
UDOH Cardiovascular Program
Office: 801-538-9209
Jana Kettering
UDOH Public Information Officer
Office: 801-538-6339
Cell: 801-541-3783

Cultural Traditions Offer Ideas for a Healthful Holiday Season

(Salt Lake City, UT) – The weather outside is frightful. The fire inside is delightful. The table is set for a sumptuous holiday meal. The aromas drifting from the table are soothing and reminiscent, drawing both family and friends together for a holiday celebration. This scene is familiar as many Utahns celebrate the holidays by feasting on traditional foods from the countries and cultures their ancestors knew. As America becomes increasingly diverse, so does the food we serve when celebrating the holiday season.

The Utah Department of the Health (UDOH) and the Utah Five a Day Association urges Utahns to take advantage of the holiday season and try a range of new dishes that celebrate the many cultures in America and use a variety of fruits and vegetables. “The result will be a delicious and nutritious array of fruit and vegetable dishes that you can incorporate into holiday festivities and into your diets year-round,” says Susannah Derbenwick, UDOH Cardiovascular Program. “Adding more fruits and vegetables into your holiday menus will also help to minimize the average two to four pound holiday weight gain.”

“The American holiday celebration feast is not what it used to be. Today it is a wonderful cornucopia of different dishes that reflect our many cultures,” said Gloria Stables, M.S., R.D., director of the National Cancer Institute’s 5 a Day program. “This ever expanding menu allows for wonderful opportunities to both celebrate your cultural roots and find new and exciting ways to add a variety of fruits and vegetables to your diet, for fun and for better health.”

Five is the minimum daily serving of fruits and vegetables people should eat for better health. Most people will benefit from up to nine servings a day. While nearly 40 percent of Americans realize the importance of eating at least five servings of fruits and vegetables a day for their overall health, few actually meet that goal. On average, only 26 percent of Utahns consume five servings of fruits and vegetables per day.

- MORE -

Page 2 - Cultural Traditions Offer Ideas for a Healthful Holiday Season

In reviews of more than 150 epidemiological studies, people who consumed five servings of fruits and vegetables daily were half as likely to develop cancer of the digestive and respiratory tracts than those who consumed fewer than 2 servings a day.

The National Cancer Institute's 5 a Day program has developed five seasonal recipes for holiday side dishes that use a variety of fruits and vegetables and celebrate some of the many cultures in America. These fruit and vegetable recipes are dishes that are served in traditional holiday meals in their respective countries. They include a Vietnamese red and green cabbage salad, a Paraguayan squash soup, a new twist on a traditional African-American sweet potato recipe, and a Cherokee corn and bean dish. The common thread that binds these five recipes is that they are fun, easy to make and use fruits and vegetables that are delicious and good for you. (Recipes enclosed).

Whatever type of fruit or vegetable you use, it is important to take advantage of the many celebrations of the holiday season to find fun ways to honor different cultures and eat healthy foods.

For more information on nutrition and cancer, consumers can call NCI's Cancer Information Service at 1-800-4-CANCER or for a link to NCI's site and for other recipes log on to www.hearthishighway.org and select 5 a Day.

- END -