

Extension Connections Newsletter

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Our offices will be closed on Fri. July 3 for the 4th of July Holiday.

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Savor the season: Summer produce for health and hydration

By Kristin Bogdonas, Illinois Extension food and nutrition educator

Summer is the perfect time to enjoy fresh, flavorful fruits and vegetables at their peak. Beyond great taste, choosing seasonal produce can support wellness by boosting hydration, increasing antioxidant intake, and providing a variety of nutrients that help the body thrive during warmer weather. Incorporating a variety of seasonal fruits and vegetables also helps increase intake of vitamins, minerals, fiber, and plant compounds linked to improved heart health, immune function, and reduced risk of chronic disease.



One of the biggest challenges during summer is staying hydrated. While drinking water is essential, many fruits and vegetables can also contribute to fluid intake. Hydrating foods contain water, electrolytes, and nutrients that help support the body's cooling system and maintain energy levels during hot days.

Focus on these four summer food groups:

Hydrating Melons

Watermelon, cantaloupe, and honeydew are composed of more than 90% water and contain important nutrients such as potassium and vitamin C. These refreshing fruits make a simple snack on their own or can be blended into smoothies, fruit salads, or frozen treats.

Antioxidant-Packed Berries

Strawberries, blueberries, raspberries, and blackberries are rich in fiber, vitamin C, and antioxidants that help

protect cells from damage caused by environmental stressors, including sun exposure. Add berries to yogurt parfaits, salads, oatmeal, or infused water for a burst of flavor and nutrition.

Crisp Summer Vegetables

Cucumbers, zucchini, bell peppers, and tomatoes provide hydration, fiber, and a variety of vitamins and minerals. These vegetables are versatile and can be enjoyed fresh, roasted, or grilled. Pair them with homemade dips such as hummus, basil pesto, or yogurt-based tzatziki for a nutritious snack or side dish.

Fresh Herbs and Citrus

Herbs such as basil, mint, cilantro, and parsley add vibrant flavor without excess sodium. Citrus fruits like lemons and limes provide vitamin C and can help make water more appealing. Try adding fresh herbs and citrus to water, salads, grilled vegetables, or fish for a bright flavor boost.

Shopping seasonally may also help stretch your food budget. When produce is in season locally, it is often more abundant, flavorful, and affordable. Farmers markets, community-supported agriculture (CSA) programs, roadside stands, and home gardens can be excellent sources of fresh summer produce.

This month, **challenge yourself to add one or two seasonal fruits or vegetables to your meals and snacks** each day. Small changes can add variety to your plate while helping you stay hydrated, nourished, and energized all summer long.

Nutrition Programs

Join Illinois Extension Food and Nutrition Educator Kristin Bogdonas for these programs at local libraries



What's In My Food? Decoding Chemicals and Safety

Tues. July 14, 2-3 pm, Kewanee Public Library

Ever wonder what's really in your food? In this eye-opening session, we'll walk through the world of natural and artificial food chemicals. Learn how to identify them, understand their impact on food safety, and weigh the pros and cons of their use. From naturally occurring compounds to additives in processed food, you'll gain the knowledge to make informed choices about what you eat.

Sign up with Susan Carlson at the library, 309-852-4505



Canning with Confidence | Mon. July 20, 5 - 7 pm

Coal Valley Public Library

Learn the essentials of home canning and gain the confidence to preserve your favorite foods safely! In this program, Kristin Bogdonas, Illinois Extension food and nutrition educator, will teach you proper techniques for using a water bath canner, including electric models, as well as steam canners and pressure canners. You will receive step-by-step instructions, helpful resources, and video demonstrations of these canners in action.

Sign up with Kaylee Floyd at the library, 309-799-3047



Growing the Garden Within: Nourishing Your Gut for Better Health

Thurs July 23, 10:30-11:30 am | Toulon Public Library

Just like a thriving garden needs the right soil, sunlight, and care, your gut depends on balance, nourishment, and variety to flourish. In this session, learn how to “feed” your gut microbiome through foods rich in fiber, fermented favorites, and plant diversity. We'll dig into practical tips that support digestion, immunity, and overall wellness. Just like your garden needs attention to grow, your gut does too—tend to your inner garden for lasting health.

Sign up with Crystal McRell at the library 309-286-5791

Tai Chi for Arthritis and Fall Prevention

Improve strength, flexibility, and balance with this 16-session, evidence-based program led by Kristin Bogdonas, Illinois Extension Food & Nutrition Educator. Gentle, low-impact movements support arthritis management, reduce fall risk, and promote overall well-being. Past participants report improved balance, less pain, greater stamina, and increased confidence.

Location: Illinois Extension Office, Milan, IL

Schedule: Mondays & Wednesdays, 9:30-10:30 AM, August 3 - September 30 (no class Aug 26 or Sept 7)

Cost: \$20 for the entire 16-session series.

Each session builds on the previous one, so registration includes the full program. Commitment to all sessions is recommended.



Tai Chi
For Arthritis & Fall Prevention

Class size limited, sign up at
go.illinois.edu/TaiChiMilan

Summer Webinars

Discover reliable health insights in the Summer Self-Care series
Wednesdays: July 1, 8, 15, 22, 29 Sign up at: go.illinois.edu/CSS-Summer2026.

Take a midday break to learn something new. The series brings together U. of I. researchers to share timely, research-based conversations on health, wellness, and the science shaping our everyday lives. **Here are the July offerings:**

July 1 | Nine Months, One Virus: How Infection in Pregnancy Shapes Child Development

Explore how infections during pregnancy, such as influenza, can influence the placenta, the developing brain, and long-term child health. This session highlights what researchers are learning from animal models and why early immune changes may matter later in life. **Presenter: Arnav Kaushik**

July 8 | MINDing the Gap: How AI Reveals Who Is Missing from Mental Health Care

Millions of Americans with mental health needs never receive treatment. Learn how researchers are using artificial intelligence to uncover who is being overlooked, what patterns are emerging, and how these insights may reshape our understanding of access to care. **Presenters: Sylvia Okon & Tourna Khan**

July 15 | Superbugs Don't Follow Orders: How Antimicrobial Resistance Spreads from Animals to Humans

Drug-resistant infections are becoming more common, affecting both animals and people. This session explains how antimicrobial resistance spreads, why it matters for everyday health, and what practical steps families can take to help reduce risk. **Presenters: Grace Lunaburg & Rashid Bajwa**



July 22 | Understanding GLP-1 Weight-Loss Medications: Clinical and Societal Impacts

GLP-1 medications are changing conversations around weight and health. Learn how these drugs work, potential side effects, and what researchers are discovering about long-term use. The session also explores issues of access, cost, and shifting public perceptions. **Presenter: Jona Kerluku**

July 29 | Inside Trauma-Focused Therapy for Youth: Understanding Treatment and Support

Trauma-focused therapies can be powerful tools for helping youth heal. This session breaks down the core components of leading treatments, explains what families can expect, and offers practical ways caregivers can support children throughout the process. **Presenter: Aggie Rieger.**

Sign up at: go.illinois.edu/CSS-Summer2026

If you need a reasonable accommodation to participate, contact Dee Walls at walls1@illinois.edu. Early requests are encouraged to allow sufficient time to meet access needs.

The Real Steps to Maintaining a Lawn: Four Seasons Gardening Webinar Tues. July 28, 1:30 -2:30 pm

Does a lawn really need to be fertilized four times a year? Is watering every day helping or hurting the lawn? And how much of that advice on social media is good advice? This session breaks down research-based lawn care practices in plain language. Learn which steps truly matter, which ones are optional, and how to choose a level of lawn care that fits individual goals, budget, and time — whether the desire is a low-maintenance yard or a more polished look.

Presenter: Chris Enroth, horticulture educator, Illinois Extension



REGISTER IN ADVANCE
go.illinois.edu/FourSeasons

Which Grass is Which? Webinar Series July 28, 29, and 30 1 PM



Grasses play a big role in natural ecosystems — from controlling soil erosion to supporting pollinators to providing food for livestock — but telling one from another isn't always easy. Is that grass valuable for grazing animals or a nuisance plant?

Learn the basics of grass identification and how to identify more than 50 common prairie, woodland, and weedy grasses found in Illinois through three interactive online workshops from University of Illinois Extension.

Which Grass is Which Series

- **July 28, Basics of Grass Identification and Identification of Common Woodland Grasses:** Explore the basics of what it takes to identify grasses, including terms and characteristics. This workshop will also cover woodland grasses.
- **July 29, Identification of Common Prairie Grasses:** Prairies are dominated by grasses. From side oats grama to switchgrass, learn about the variety of grasses found in Midwestern prairies.
- **July 30, Identification of Common Nuisance Grasses:** Commonly found on roadsides and disturbed areas, it is important to be able to tell these nuisance grasses apart from more desirable species.

These workshops are free, open to the public, and recommended for those working in the natural resource field and [Master Naturalist](#) volunteers. Participants can attend one or all three workshops. The workshops will be recorded and made available on the Illinois Extension [YouTube account](#) for those unable to attend live.

The series will not cover the identification of lawn grasses or the planting, care, or management of grasses.

Register by July 24 at go.illinois.edu/grassworkshop.

Explore the [Grasses at a Glance](#) blog for more information about grasses found in Illinois. For more information or if you need a reasonable accommodation to participate, contact Erin Garrett at emedvecz@illinois.edu.

4-H Fair Shows & Family Events

Mercer County 4-H Shows July 5-18, Aledo, IL

Tues, July 7 — Poultry Show, **8 AM**
Rabbit Show, **10 AM** | Sheep Show, **4 PM**

Thur, July 9 — Swine Show, **9 AM** | Goat Show, **2 PM**
Jr. & Sr. Master Showmanship, **3 PM**

Fri, July 10 — Dairy/Beef Show, **9 AM**
Youth Livestock Auction, **6 PM**

Sat, July 11 — Dog Obedience & Showmanship, **9 AM**

Sat, July 18 — 4-H Horse Show, 4K Plus Arena, **9 AM**



Rock Island County 4-H Shows July 11-17, East Moline

Mon, July 13 — Dog Fun Show, **6 PM**

Tues, July 14 — Horse Fun Show, **10 AM**
Dairy Show, **10 AM** | Poultry Show, **2 PM**

Wed, July 15 — Horse & Pony Show, **9 AM**
Sheep Show, **1 PM**

Thurs, July 16 — Swine Show, **8 AM**
Bucket Calf/Breeding Beef/Steer Show, **9 AM**
Horse & Pony Show, **9 AM**
Master Showmanship, **12:30 PM**
Ag Championship Games (4-H members), **3 PM**

Fri, July 17 — Goat Show, **10 AM** | Rabbit Show, **2 PM**
Livestock Auction (4-H members), **6 PM**



Stark County Jr. Fair July 23-27, Wyoming, IL

Fri, July 24 — Pee Wee Swine Showmanship • Jr. Fair Swine Show • 4-H Swine Shows — **9 AM**

Sat, July 25 — • Pee Wee Goat/Sheep Showmanship • Jr. Fair Goat & Sheep Show • 4-H Goat & Sheep Show — **1 PM** | Pee Wee Poultry Showmanship • Poultry Show — **3 PM** | Pee Wee Rabbit Showmanship • Rabbits & Rodents Show — **3:30 PM**

Sun, July 26 — Pee Wee Cattle Showmanship, **10 AM**
Bucket Calf & Dairy Show, **10 AM**
Jr. Fair Beef Show & 4-H Beef Show, **11 AM**

Mon, July 27 — Horse & Pony Show, **9 AM**
4-H & Jr. Fair Awards Ceremonies, **6:30 PM**
Sale of Champions, **7 PM**



Farm in the Park Tues. Aug 4, 11 am - 1 pm, Galva, IL

Bring your family for a fun day exploring agriculture, horticulture, and healthy living with Illinois Extension and 4-H.

Join us at Veteran's Park (across from our office) for these fun activities:

- Free Petting Zoo
- Kids Crafts & Activity Stations
- Interactive Games & Prizes
- Health, Wellness, Horticulture, and Agriculture Resources
- Come for lunch: Visit our lunch stand and support Henry County 4-H.

We look forward to seeing you there!

