

# GOOD FOOD BOX



## MAY NEWSLETTER

### Spring is here!

Farmers markets are open & offer us local vegetables & fruits. In May, look for local greens, asparagus & rhubarb. In the warmer months, take advantage of the local harvest to eat delicious, nutritious fruits and veggies every day. This is also the time to start freezing, home canning and preserving. This will supply allow you to enjoy local foods throughout the year.

### Now is the time to think about planting a garden.

Growing some of your own food can help your budget. Talk to your children about planting seeds to grow your own vegetables. Choose a sunny location in your yard, on a patio or balcony. Tomatoes, lettuce and herbs such as basil, parsley and chives grow well in pots or containers. Plant in late May or early June, water well and you will be enjoying your vegetables by August.

**Gardening** offers family fun. In a garden you can be active, relax and spend time together.

Caring for plants helps develop responsibility. It builds self esteem when kids see what they can grow.

A garden can teach your child about new foods...kids usually taste what they grow!

No garden? Visit a community vegetable garden as a family.

There are opportunities to volunteer to help with weeding, watering and harvesting at community shared gardens.

The **Niagara Community Garden Network (NCGN)** is made up of interested residents and organizations from across Niagara who are making community gardening part of life. Community gardens are located in municipal parks, building rooftops, at senior's residences, school board properties, beside churches, and more.

**Contact:** [info@climateactionniagara.ca](mailto:info@climateactionniagara.ca)

or visit their website [www.climateactionniagara.ca](http://www.climateactionniagara.ca) for information and locations.

## SUPPORTERS OF THE GOOD FOOD BOX



### Asparagus

Enjoy this Ontario spring vegetable in May and June.

Nutrition: an excellent source of folic acid & good source of Vitamin A & C.

Storage: best eaten fresh but can be stored for 2-3 days in the refrigerator.

Wrap stem ends in a damp paper towel or stand upright in a container of water.

Wrap entire bunch in plastic wrap.

Preparation: wash in cold running water to remove sand & dirt; snap off tough woody end of spears.

To keep flavor & crispness, do not overcook.

Thin spears will cook in 3 minutes or less.

Steam or microwave for 4- 6 minutes.

Brush with oil; then grill on the barbeque or oven roast at 450° F for 8-10 minutes.

Enjoy hot or cold as a vegetable side dish with any grilled fish or meat.

Do you have questions about nutrition and healthy eating?

### EatRight Ontario

provides free nutrition advice from *Registered Dietitians*

Call toll free: 1-877-510-510-2

or visit [www.eatrightontario.ca](http://www.eatrightontario.ca)

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# RECIPES

## Health benefits of gardening

Spending time with nature can help you unwind & relax. Gardening as an activity has been a proven mood booster, easing symptoms of depression and anxiety.

It may be a more effective stress buster than many other hobbies.

Planting colourful flowers will improve the beauty of your surroundings.

A vegetable garden will put food on your plate.

Fruits & vegetables contain important antioxidants.

Strawberries, blueberries, spinach, kale, broccoli, beets & peppers contain high levels of these brain boosting antioxidants.

## Physical health benefits

Many people enjoy gardening as a healthy way to keep active.

It can be as strenuous or as gentle as you want it to be.

Gardening can involve walking, bending, stretching and reaching – whether it's pruning branches, planting seeds or digging up weeds.

Gardening helps people improve strength & flexibility.

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## Rhubarb Sauce

Serve as a topping for yogurt, ice cream or angel food cake. It can also be used as a spread on toast or scones.

6 cups rhubarb, chopped into 1/2" pieces (about 12 stalks)  
1 cup (250 mL) sugar or equivalent in sweetener  
¼ cup (50 mL) water  
1 ½ tsp (7 mL) grated orange rind  
1 tsp (5 mL) each vanilla & cinnamon

Place rhubarb, sugar and water into a medium saucepan, Cook over medium heat, stirring until sugar dissolves. Simmer, stirring occasionally, until rhubarb is tender, about 10 minutes. Stir in orange rind, vanilla and cinnamon. Let cool. Refrigerate for up to 5 days.

*Variation:* add a few fresh or frozen strawberries before cooking.

## Roasted Asparagus & Sweet Pepper Salad

1 bunch asparagus, about 1 lb (500 g)  
1 sweet orange & 1 yellow pepper, seeded & sliced  
3 Tbsp (45 mL) olive or canola oil  
Salt, to taste  
½ cup (125 mL) mini Bocconcini  
or sliced mozzarella cheese  
1 ½ cups (375 mL) cherry tomatoes  
2 Tbsp (30 mL) balsamic vinegar  
¼ tsp (1 mL) hot pepper flakes  
1/3 cup (75 mL) thinly shredded fresh basil

Break off asparagus stems where they snap easily; discard ends or use for stock.

Diagonally slice asparagus in half.

Place asparagus on a rimmed baking sheet and peppers on another.

Toss each with 1 Tbsp oil & pinch of salt.

Roast in 400°F (200°C) oven until tender, 5-7 minutes for asparagus & 8-10 minutes for peppers.

Place cooked vegetables in a large bowl.

Stir in cheese, tomatoes, remaining 1 Tbsp oil, vinegar, pepper flakes & pinch of salt.

Cover & refrigerate for up to 1 day.

Stir in basil right before serving.

**TIP:** Spread a tortilla or wrap with hummus, then fill with salad. Wrap & enjoy as a vegetarian sandwich.

## Rhubarb

This early spring fruit has large green leaves & pink or red stalks.

It has a mouth-puckering tart flavor.

**Caution:** eat the stalks only; the leaves contain oxalic acid which can be toxic!

Nutrition: a source of Vitamin C, calcium & potassium.

Storage: wrap stalks & refrigerate.

Wash & freeze now to enjoy later in the year.

Preparation: rhubarb requires cooking & the addition of sugar or sweetener. It is delicious combined with strawberries in sauces, fruit crisp or pies.

*Recipes & information adapted from Foodland Ontario*

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