

PENNY SAVER NEWS

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Juicy Goodness

Summer fruits are here. Watermelons are juicy, peaches are dripping goodness. A tall glass of smoothie, fruit of your choice, can be just super-refreshing on a hot day. A smoothie can sometimes be the only way you get a picky child to put some fruit in his mouth. Unfortunately juices don't usually carry the same nutrition as the fruits they're made from. And be careful too. Raw juices can carry enough bacteria to make us sick.

Since 1999 there have been enough outbreaks of food poisoning caused by raw juices that the FDA requires a warning on them. Any juice that is sold in a supermarket and that is not pasteurized must have this in a box on the label: "**WARNING:** This product has not been pasteurized and therefore may contain harmful bacteria that can cause serious illness in children, the elderly, and persons with weakened immune systems." It could take 20 minutes, or several days, for illness to develop.

Pasteurizing heats juice just hot enough to kill any dangerous bacteria. It won't kill everything, the juice could still spoil. If you've ever been the last one to finish a bottle of juice from the 'fridge and noticed that it seemed a little extra sour, or maybe a little fizzy, like someone had added some carbonation, well, that was a fermented juice. Most likely it did not make you sick, but something else was growing in there.

Juice that is made on the spot such as at roadside stands, and juice that is sold by the glass is not required to have the warning label. Then it's up to you to ask what kind of safety measures are being used. Take a good look at the juicing machine if you can see it. Unless it looks very clean, as though it's been cleaned within the last hour,

you might want to reconsider whether to buy juice there or not. If it's been sitting with drips of nice sweet juice on it, bits of fruit pulp sticking to the inside, for more than 2 hours, there's a good chance that a bunch of bacteria have taken advantage of the free lunch and are growing in there.

If you're making the juice at home be sure to start with clean equipment, and clean fruit. Wash all fruit before you cut into it. If you cut into one before you wash it, the knife just carried bacteria from the surface into the middle where all that sweet juice is. Yummy, but not for us! Most fruit will have at least a few bacteria on the skin. Those that grew on the ground - watermelons, cantaloupes, honeydew melons - will have even more. Any with rough or fuzzy skins will probably have collected a lot too. Bacteria can hide in the rough fuzzy spots. So wash fruit well. Rub them under running water. Brushes aren't necessary unless they're really dirty.

Making smoothies in a blender is better than using a juice extractor that spits the pulp out the other side. That pulp is good, healthy dietary fiber that shouldn't be thrown away. There are usually some minerals and vitamins that get lost along with the fiber, so there's more nutrition lost.

But eating pieces of whole fruit, even in a fruit salad, is better yet. When fruit is chopped in a blender there's a lot of air beaten into it. Air is the biggest enemy of vitamin C and no friend of some other vitamins either. When we blend fruit and turn it into juice a lot of the vitamin C is destroyed. The longer the juice sits after it's made the more is breaking down. Make your smoothie and enjoy it right away for best value.

Stick to just one juice or smoothie a day, for yourself and for the children. It's easy to chug down too many calories when they're liquid in a glass. Even a single glass

of apple or orange juice could have all the sugar and calories of 3 or 4 whole fruits. A smoothie with a banana, an apple, some pineapple, a few strawberries, some milk or yogurt, a touch of honey..... That's more fruit than we'd eat at one time, and a lot more calories. Be careful, one's plenty!

Here's a different way to make fruit interesting for children. Use red and blue grapes and white apple cubes for celebrations on the 4th of July, or other favorite fruits. Let the little ones use toothpicks to skewer their pieces.

Creamy Orange Dip for Fruit Kebabs

6 oz light or fat-free cream cheese, softened ¼ cup frozen orange juice concentrate

Big bowl of mixed fruit, cubes or balls Small (8 inch) skewers, toothpicks

Ground cinnamon or apple pie spice in a shaker

Beat the cream cheese and orange juice together for 1 to 2 minutes until smooth.

Serve the fruit and cheese sauce together, letting people make their own kebabs.

Drizzle sauce over fruit and add a shake of cinnamon or pie spice.