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FOOD $ENSE

UtahStateUniversity COOPERATIVE EXTENSION

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Celery

Food $ense Guide to Eating Fresh Fruits and Vegetables

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Utah Local Fresh Season: Fall

Availability: Celery is available year-round from local grocery stores.

Eating: Celery has a crisp and fresh taste and adds a unique fresh boost to soups, stir-fries, and salads.

Selecting: For best taste and quality select celery that is light green (but not white) in color, has fresh leaves with no signs of wilting, and is free from bruises and discoloration. Celery should feel heavy for its size and should "squeak" when you squeeze the plant gently with your hand. Be sure to avoid stalks that are limp, bendable, and spread out.

Cleaning and Preparing: Separate each of the celery stalks and thoroughly rinse with running water, as dirt is often lodged between the individual stalks. Trim the stalks of the leaves and bottom white area. Cut the stalks to desired length and size.

Storing: Celery keeps best when stored in a plastic bag in the vegetable crisper drawer of the refrigerator. Store the vegetable away from fruits to prevent premature spoilage. Celery will keep for 1-2 weeks.

Storage Tip: To revive limp stalks of celery shave a small amount from the bottom end and soak in luke-warm water for about a half-hour, then refrigerate.

Cooking: Celery can be eaten cooked, raw, boiled, sautéed, or steamed. Celery gives a great crunch in your favorite salad, and it adds a great color and flavor to soups. Simply chop celery to desired size and shape then eat plain, with a dip or add to cooked dishes.

Celery is commonly used to make a traditional French soup, stew, meat, and sauce flavoring mixture called mirepoix (*meer-pwah*). To make a basic mirepoix combine 1 cup diced onion, ½ cup diced carrot, ½ cup diced celery, 1 teaspoon of oil or butter and sauté vegetables over medium heat until tender. Add soup, sauce or meat to the mixture and continue cooking as specified in dish recipe.

Nutrition Highlight: Celery is very low in calories and a good source of vitamin C, vitamin A, vitamin K, folate and potassium.

Growing: Celery can be grown in Utah. For more information see "Celery in the Garden" by Brandon West and Dan Drost (see reference 5).

Preserving: Freezing is the best home preservation method for celery. Frozen celery will lose it crispness and will only be suitable for cooked dishes. Using celery fresh will provide the best taste and texture.

References:

1. www.fruitsandveggiesmatter.org
2. www.produceoasis.com
3. www.cooks.com
4. www.dole.com
5. West, Brandon. "Celery in the Garden." *Utah State Extension* 1. (2010): 1-2. Web. 21 Jul 2010. <http://extension.usu.edu/files/publications/publication/HG_Garden_2006-03.pdf>.

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Savory Veggie and Black Bean Soup

1 large onion, chopped
2 cups celery, chopped
2 cups carrots, chopped
4 cloves garlic, chopped
1 tablespoon ground cumin
2 teaspoons chili powder
¼ teaspoon black pepper
4 cups water
1 can veggie broth
4 (15 ounce) cans low sodium black beans, rinsed and drained
2 cups frozen corn, thawed
1 (14.5 ounce) can diced tomatoes
2 cups salsa

1. In a large soup pot, combine onion, celery, carrots, garlic, cumin, chili powder, black pepper, water, veggie broth and 2 cans of the beans.
2. Place remaining 2 cans of black beans and salsa in a blender or food processor.
3. Blend on high speed until smooth.
4. Stir into soup mixture along with corn and tomatoes.
5. Bring to boil, reduce to simmer, cook until veggies are tender, about 30 minutes.

Celery and Pear Salad

Adapted from www.eatingwell.com

2 tablespoons cider, pear, raspberry or other fruit vinegar
2 tablespoons honey
¼ tsp salt
2 ripe pears, preferably red Barlett or Anjou, diced
4 stalks celery, trimmed and sliced into small chunks
½ cup diced cheddar cheese (white extra sharp or regular)
½ cup chopped pecans or walnuts, toasted (see tip)
Pepper, to taste

Combine vinegar, honey and salt in a bowl. Whisk until well blended. Add pears and gently stir to coat. Add celery, cheese and pecans; stir to combine. Season with pepper. Serve immediately or chill for up to an hour and then serve. Salad can be served as a side or as a center of a lettuce wrap.

Tips:

- *Don't make the salad too far in advance. The vinegar will make the pears go mushy if left on for too long.*
- *To toast nuts cook them in a small dry skillet, stirring constantly, over medium-low heat. Cook for 2-4 minutes or until the nuts become fragrant and lightly browned.*

Yield: 6 servings