

Alaska Vegetarian Society

May 2009

Green Up Your Life

by Delisa Renideo

This time of year is so exciting to me! My eyes eagerly scan the hillsides for that first hint of green prior to the explosion of green soon to follow. I also begin gazing at my garden plots, still covered with last fall's leaves and winter debris, visualizing the profusion of green growth that will eventually find its way to our dinner table. A few blades of green grass are poking through our still brownish lawn, promising to expand to a carpet of green where we'll play ball with the dogs and eat at our picnic table whenever the weather is nice.

Green means something else these days, as well. By eating a plant-based diet, we are choosing a more environmentally friendly lifestyle. Eating plants directly, rather than processing them through an animal and then eating the animal, requires



only about 5% of the land area, and also about 5% of the water. Eating a plant-based diet also limits pollution dramatically because farmed animals produce 130 times



more manure than humans in the U.S. This ends up in our rivers and ground water, as well as affecting air quality. In addition, animal agriculture uses more energy than all forms of transportation combined. So eating a plant-based diet is definitely the "green" thing to do.

Green is a color to maximize in our kitchens, as well. Green leafy vegetables, such as spinach, kale, collards, and lettuce are packed with nutrients. Eat them in salads, steam them lightly, add them to soups, or include a handful in your smoothies. Even though we need to eat a variety of fruits, vegetables, whole grains and beans, "green leafies" are at the top of the nutrient density charts. Let's eat our greens!

Eating a whole foods, plant-based diet will save you some green, too. Most of us discover that we spend less at the check-out counter after switching from the Standard American Diet (SAD) of highly processed foods and animal products. See *Green Up Your Life*, cont'd on pg. 6

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In addition to the direct savings, just think about how costly it is to get sick. Even one day in the hospital averages \$2000, according to Wikipedia. And that's not counting tests, treatments, surgery, and medications. Choosing optimal nutrition greatly reduces our chances of getting heart disease, cancer, and diabetes. I, for one, would much rather spend my money on delicious, healthy food than on medical bills!

If you haven't tried your hand at gardening yet, (or even if you have.), I really encourage you to find a place to plant some veggies. We are so blessed in Alaska to have loooooong hours of daylight that make our gardens grow so fast you can just about see them growing! You can start with something small and manageable if you are new to gardening. Raised beds work well in small areas, and even



ate a healthy, organic garden.

If gardening isn't a possibility for you, or you have only a small garden, you may want to consider joining a CSA (Community Supported Agriculture) where you can buy a subscription to fresh produce that is available weekly, all summer long. We have 3 CSA's in the Palmer, AK area: Arctic Organics, Spring Creek Farm, and Kenley's Alaskan Vegetables and Flowers. Palmer also has 2 U Pick farms: Arctic Organics and Pyrah's Pioneer Peak Farm. Another option is to visit the local farmer's markets. These are available in Wasilla, Palmer, and Anchorage. In any case, be sure to take advantage of the wonderful vegetables that are produced locally this summer. May is a great time to maximize the green in our lives. We've made it through another winter and life is ready to come bursting out all over. Let's live it up!

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as planting lettuce and spinach in a pot instead of flowers. (Or even along with your flowers.) I highly recommend reading the book, *Teaming With Microbes*, in order to understand how to work *with* nature to cre-

container gardening can provide some delectable results. It can be as simple

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