

# Family Issues

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Family Issues is published six times a year. This newsletter provides current information in the areas of family development, leadership skills, nutrition, food safety, money and time management.

## The Ponzi berry?

If you have been watching the news you may have heard about the latest nutritional supplement using the acai' berry: this fruit is harvested from a Brazilian palm, acai' (ah-SAH-ee) berries are a dietary staple in Brazil and have been used medicinally by Amazonian tribes. Acai' juice was introduced in the U.S. in 2001, and there are now more than 50 new food and drink products containing acai'. As a juice, pulp, powder or capsule, it is marketed as a magic path to weight loss, a wrinkle remover, a way to cleanse the body of "toxins," and indeed just a plain old miracle cure. It is often combined with other ingredients, such as glucosamine, so that the claims for benefits multiply exponentially.

There have been few studies to determine whether the acai' berry does have any real potential benefits. Like many other fruits, acai' berries are high in antioxidants (molecules that quell cell-damaging free radicals) and other interesting compounds. But these were lab studies, and the results may not apply to humans. There is no scientific basis for weight-loss claims or any other health claims for acai'. The term "antioxidant" has become a sales tool.

There has been miss use and fraud with the groups selling the products that consumer protection groups are now coming out against acai' marketers. There have been hundreds of complaints registered and you may never get your money back. There is no magic berry for weight loss or good health. Acai' berries are no doubt a good food, like other berries but why pay more for them or a supplement containing them.

Source: University of California, Berkeley Wellness Letter, Vol 25, issue 9, June 2009



*Barbara B. Abo*

Extension Educator

## Because you asked:

*Why do I need to process my jams and jellies? I have my grandmother's recipe and she never processed her jams and jellies?*



Mold and other spoilage microorganisms can grow if the jar is not sealed tightly. Water bath processing produces a strong vacuum seal. Jams or jellies need to be processed five minutes in a boiling water canner with water one inch above tops of jars. Ten minutes if elevation is 1001 to 6000 ft. and 15 minutes if above 6000 ft. Be sure your hard work of making jam and jelly does not go to waste by processing for the correct amount of time.

### *Where can I find fresh local produce to buy?*

The Idaho State Department of Agriculture has a flyer called Idaho Farmers Market, 2009 Guide. You can get a copy by calling 208-332-8530 or emailing [lacey.menasco@agri.idaho.gov](mailto:lacey.menasco@agri.idaho.gov) or visit the web site at <http://www.agri.idaho.gov>. Produce grown in Idaho for June is: cherries, lettuce, garden peas, snap peas, potatoes, radishes, raspberries, rhubarb, spinach, and strawberries.

There are several markets in the Boise area: Emmett, Middleton, Caldwell, Nampa, Eagle, Meridian, Kuna, Boise. McCall has a market if you are in the area. These are great places to find fresh produce, meat products and plants.



## More on Whole Grains

"Eat half of your grains whole" - this diet recommendation comes from the Food Guide Pyramid.

Add variety to your cooking with barley, a grain that is:

- A complex carbohydrate that provides the body with fuel it needs for physical activity and for proper organ function.
- Rich in dietary fiber—barley is high in beta-glucan, a soluble fiber, which significantly lowers total cholesterol and reduces the risk of cardiovascular disease.

Like other grains barley requires cooking time for water adsorption. Regular pearl barley should be cooked for approximately 45 to 60 minutes. "Quick" pearl barley has been rolled and steamed.

### *Grains continued*

This product requires only 10 to 12 minutes cooking time. To save time on busy cooking days, prepare barley in advance and freeze to use later.

It is easy to add barley to prepared foods quickly and easily.

- Add a cup of cooked pearly barley to a package of fresh or frozen stir-fry vegetables.
- Stretch meatloaf or meatball recipe with a cup of cooked pearl barley.
- Make good canned soup even better by adding a cup of cooked pearl barley. Tomato, vegetable, split pea, beef, chicken and minestrone soups are made better by adding barley.
- For a quick whole meal salad, gently toss a cup of cooked pearl barley with 1 ½ cups cooked and cubed chicken, 1 cup halved green grapes, and ½ cup each sliced celery and water chestnuts. Dress with your favorite salad dressing.

Source: Idaho Barley Commission  
208-334-2090,  
[www.idahobarley.org](http://www.idahobarley.org)



## Food irradiation—the debate

We expect our food to be clean, wholesome, and safe. In spite of the efforts of growers, distributors, the government, and the public an estimated 76 million Americans get food poisoning each year.

### How can food be made safer?

One answer is irradiation. This may not be the answer you want to hear. There's opposition to food irradiation, and several organizations are campaigning against it. They claim it won't help and may actually be harmful.

### What is food irradiation?

This process exposes food to radiation in order to kill insects, harmful bacteria, and parasites (but not viruses). There are three technologies for this.

- Electron beams (e-beams) from an electron gun, the kind of apparatus in the back of the picture tube in a conventional TV that propels electrons onto the screen. E-beams are used by manufacturers for sterilizing some medical instruments. This is the most common method of food irradiation.
- Radiation (gamma rays) from radioactive cobalt 60 or cesium 137—a method that's been used for years to sterilize medical equipment. It's also used in treating cancer.
- X-rays from a machine similar to the one in a dentist's office, but more powerful. This technology is still in the early stages of development for food irradiation.

All these are cold methods. They do not “cook” the food, nor do they make it radioactive. Any processing changes food to some extent. Irradiation may slightly reduce some vitamins, such as A, C, and folate. According to studies, there may be small changes in taste and texture, depending on the dose. Safety of irradiated foods has been studied; there is no evidence that they contain toxic residues or dangerous by-products from radiation.

It may help to think of irradiation as similar to pasteurization, the heat process that kills pathogens in milk and other liquids. The foods that are approved for irradiation are: spices, wheat, potatoes, pork, beef, and chicken. Eggs and strawberries may also be irradiated, along with other fruits. Last summer, iceberg lettuce and spinach were added to the list. But you may not find irradiated foods just because they are on the list. There is a logo that identifies the foods that have been irradiated.

Food should be clean and packaged before irradiation, but it is possible for contamination to occur after irradiation. You will still need to wash produce and refrigerate irradiated foods. Meats will still need to be fully cooked and you will need to scrub cutting boards and not allow uncooked meat juices to contaminate other foods.



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## Enter in your local fair this summer!!



Every county has a local fair. If you are not an exhibitor already consider entering produce, canned or baked foods, or handiwork. Check with your local extension office for fair dates and entry information.

If you want to enter The Western Idaho Fair in Boise they accept exhibitors from the region; dates for the Western Idaho Fair are August 21-30. The theme this year is Poultry in Motion. Entries will be accepted at the fairgrounds Monday, August 17 and Tuesday, August 18 from 11:00 am to 7:00 pm. Entry forms can be completed on line at [www.idahofair.com](http://www.idahofair.com), just follow the link to competitive exhibits. The deadline is August 10 and a \$2.00 convenience fee will apply. Exhibitor's handbooks are available in area Extension offices.

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