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Staying Healthy... Staying Safe

Fruits and vegetables are an important part of a healthy diet. Your local farmers grow an amazing variety of fresh fruits and vegetables that are both nutritious and delicious. The New York State Sanitary Code does not specify an approved source for produce. The use of fruits, vegetables and pasteurized juices obtained from local farms and suppliers is allowed in food service establishments such as schools. When serving fresh local produce and pasteurized juices in your schools, it's important to handle these foods safely in order to reduce the risks of foodborne illness.

Protecting Produce

Sometimes, harmful bacteria that may be in the soil or water where produce grows may come in contact with the fruits and vegetables and contaminate them. However, it's easy to help protect your customers from potential illness by following these safe-handling tips!

Buying and Storage Tips for Fresh Local Produce

- Make sure the produce meets purchase specifications for the school lunch program.
- Produce obtained locally may have more visible soil than other commercially available produce. Soil can be removed from the produce by careful washing.
- Do not accept produce that is bruised or damaged.
- Juice products must be pasteurized to ensure safety.
- Certain perishable fresh fruits and vegetables (like strawberries, lettuce and herbs) are best maintained by storing at a temperature of 40° F or below.
- Rotate produce using the "First In, First Out" method.
- Save receipts or invoices indicating produce type, quantity, date of delivery/purchase, and name of farm or supplier.

Preparation Tips for Fresh Produce

Begin with clean hands. Wash your hands for 20 seconds with warm water and soap before and after preparing fresh produce.

- All produce, regardless of source, should be thoroughly washed. Wash fruits and vegetables under running water just before eating, cutting or cooking.
- Scrub firm produce, such as melons and cucumbers, with a clean produce brush.
- The use of commercially available produce sanitizers is not required.
- Cut away any damaged or bruised areas on fresh fruits and vegetables before preparing and/or eating. Produce that looks rotten should be discarded.
- Keep fruits and vegetables that will be eaten raw separate from other foods such as raw meat, poultry or seafood - and from kitchen utensils used for those products.