Kids and families who grow their own produce are more likely to eat the fruits (and vegetables) of their labor.

Because gardening is an effective strategy for healthier food consumption, it’s a great idea to prepare your own family garden.

Fruits and vegetables can be contaminated any time from planting to eating. Most pathogens are killed by cooking, but they are difficult to wash off produce that will be eaten raw. Try to minimize contamination risks by practicing safe protocol.

**Food Safety in Harvesting and Storing Your Produce**

- Always use common sense when it comes to food safety. The goal is to prevent contamination of produce by microbes and chemical contaminants from seed to plate.
- Wash your hands often.
- Wash food-grade harvest and storage containers with soap and water. Sanitize and let it dry between uses. You can make your own sanitizer using 1 tablespoon of unscented bleach to 1 gallon of water.
- Clean and sanitize sinks, counters, cutting board, and utensils before preparing any food.
- Shake or rub off all excess garden soil or debris before bringing garden produce into the kitchen. A staging area for pre-cleaning and sorting is helpful to keep soil and food waste out of the kitchen.
- To slow mold and rotting, do not completely wash produce before storing.
- Do not rinse produce with water that is more than 10 degrees warmer or cooler than the temperature of the produce. Contaminants can be absorbed through porous tissues when large variations in temperature occur.
- Wash and sanitize cutting boards, dishes, utensils, and countertops within hot water and soap between preparation of raw meats and garden produce.
- Always use potable or drinkable water to wash produce.
- Keep raw produce separate from other foods such as meat, poultry and seafood.
- Thoroughly rinse all produce before eating, cutting, peeling, and cooking.
- Scrub rough peels and rinds with a vegetable brush.
- Discard any bruised or damaged pieces of fruits and vegetables.
- For refrigerated produce, store in refrigeration that is between 35 to 40 degrees Fahrenheit.
- Refrigerate all cut or peeled produce in airtight containers.

**Sanitation and Tool Safety**

- Wash your hands often when using garden tools and supplies. Clean garden tools and surfaces with soap and clean water before and after each use.
- Never lay long-handed tools on the ground. Lean against a wall or fence.
- Tools should not be held above waist level.
- Always keep an arm’s length between you and another person when using gardening tools.

Happy Gardening!!!