

FREEDOM

K I T C H E N M A G A Z I N E

Summer 2026 Issue

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SUMMER BERRY RECIPES

Eating in-season is sweet

FRUIT SNACK FRAUD

Where's the Fruit?

BACKYARD BERRIES

Beginner's Guide

YOUNG GROWERS

Early Entrepreneurs

GROWING

Lettuce

U-PICK

Agritourism

CREATIVITY
CONVENIENCE

Creativity over Convenience

This magazine
was made to be shared.

Food is better shared. So is wisdom.

[illegible]

Strawberry Banana Trifle

Ingredients

Preheat oven to 350 and generously grease an 8x8 baking dish with coconut oil
NOTE: double the recipe to do a 9x13

Whisk together eggs, coconut oil, vanilla, sweetener, and milk. Add into the bowl of dry ingredients and use a large spatula or spoon to stir together. Pour batter into a greased dish and bake shortcake 18-22 min (almost 30 min for a double recipe in a 9x13). Edges should be slightly browned and cake completely set when done. Cool in fridge while you make the pudding.

Ingredients

Drain cashews and transfer them to a blender. Add the bananas, milk, sweetener, coconut oil and vanilla. Blend on high for about 30 seconds, until combined with no lumps.

Assembling the Trifle

Instructions for putting it all together.

You will want to prepare for this recipe by soaking your cashews at least 4 hours before you want to get started.

Then you will make the coconut flour shortcake and bake it.

Next is the Banana Pudding made in the blender.

Finally, you will rinse your strawberries and slice them. Remember the trick of using the vegetable peeler to get the stem out of the strawberries. Place your sliced strawberries in a bowl. Then slice your bananas and put them in a bowl.

Whipped topping could be made from scratch, for this recipe we are using TruWhip or CocoWhip to show you the better options from the store.

Get a Trifle bowl, or a Casserole Dish to layer your Trifle in.

Cut a piece of the shortcake, crumble it and layer it in the bottom of the bowl

Followed by a layer of banana pudding

Then layer in sliced strawberries and sliced bananas

Finally a layer of whipped topping

And start over with a layer of shortcake, banana pudding, strawberries, bananas, whipped topping, and then 1 more layer of shortcake, banana pudding, strawberries, bananas, whipped topping.

Cover and refrigerate until you are ready to serve.

This was made in cooking class and the video is in the Freedom Kitchen Kids Library.





Letter from the Editor

This summer, I hope families spend more time outside.

I hope children pick berries, climb trees, get dirty, and come home hungry from playing in the sun. The deeper I go in my work as a health coach, the more I realize that many of the things we need most are surprisingly simple:

Fresh air.

Sunlight.

Clean water.

Nature.

Real food.

Connection.

Soon my raspberry bushes will be overflowing again, and later this summer I'll be picking blackberries at my son's home with stained fingers and bowls full of fruit for cobbler and buckles. Those small moments reconnect us to something real.

This issue was created to inspire that kind of summer.

Aside from recording cooking videos, which I need to do indoors, I find myself moving outdoors whenever possible to work, think, and create. Nature changes the way we feel.

The Mood, Minerals & More course is now available, making functional health more accessible and affordable. I'm finishing a new Food Smarts for families and Fall semester of cooking classes will be all new.

I hope this issue inspires you to grow something, cook something, learn something, and spend more time truly living this summer.

Lisa

Lisa Jendza, FDNP

Functional Nutrition Counselor | Health Coach



Storyteller Series continues in this issue. Every meal carries a story long before it reaches our table, and true food wisdom requires more than labels and recipes—it requires understanding the people, cultures, and communities behind our food. This series includes short stories from around the world. Our first journey begins in Ghana, where culture and cocoa intersect. Written by a mom from Ghana. Read with curiosity. Feel your connection to other cultures.

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Mind Over Matter

What Ultra-Processed Foods Are Doing to Your Mental State

Every living thing needs three things to survive: sunlight, water, and minerals from the earth.

Real food is simply nature's way of packaging those three things so your body can use them.

A strawberry growing in June pulls water up through its roots and minerals from the soil. The red that colors it comes from anthocyanins — compounds the plant builds to protect itself from UV radiation, the same compounds that protect you from inflammation when you eat it. The sweetness is stored solar energy. The minerals in its flesh came directly from the ground beneath it.

That is what food is. A living thing that captured the sun, held it in water, and drew the earth's minerals into its cells.

Now consider a fruit snack. There is no sun in it. No soil. No living thing at all. It was concocted in a factory from corn syrup, modified corn starch, gelatin, artificial flavoring, and dyes. Whatever fragment of original ingredient it once contained has been processed so many times that the structure is gone — the fiber removed, the minerals stripped, the phytonutrients destroyed by heat

and pressure, then sometimes partially replaced with synthetic substitutes.

A fruit snack is not food that became convenient. It is a product engineered to simulate food while delivering almost none of what food is for.

Most families know, at some level, that ultra-processed foods aren't great for the body. What they don't know is what those foods are doing to the mind.

The Number that Changes the Conversation

People who eat the most ultra-processed foods have 53% higher odds of depression and anxiety compared to those who eat the least.

Not a little higher. Not statistically marginal. More than half again the risk of common mental health disorders — confirmed across a 2022 systematic review and meta-analysis of observational studies involving hundreds of thousands of people.

When the data is separated: high ultra-processed food intake is associated with 44% higher odds of depressive symptoms and 48% higher odds of anxiety symptoms. And in

ULTRA-PROCESSED FOODS ARE OFTEN PRESENT IN QUANTITIES THAT ACCUMULATE.



prospective studies — the ones that follow people over time rather than measuring a single moment — higher ultra-processed food intake predicted a 22% increased risk of future depression in people who were not yet depressed when the study began.

Read that again. The food came first. The depression followed.

This is not a fringe finding. It has been replicated across populations, countries, and methodologies. The direction of the evidence is remarkably consistent: the more ultra-processed food in the diet, the greater the risk of depression, anxiety, and psychological distress.

And yet most families have never heard this connection made clearly.

Most people know ultra-processed foods are bad for the body. Almost nobody connects them to how they feel on a Tuesday afternoon.

Why This Happens

The association between ultra-processed foods and mental health is not random. There are clear biological pathways — and understanding them changes how you look at what you put on your plate.



Notes
in the
margin

who needs
to know this?

1. The gut-brain axis.

Approximately 90% of the body's serotonin — the neurotransmitter most associated with mood stability, calm, and emotional regulation — is produced in the gut, not the brain. It is made by beneficial bacteria that live in the intestinal lining, and those bacteria require fiber, phytonutrients, and diverse whole foods to thrive.

Ultra-processed foods feed the wrong bacteria. They are typically low in fiber and rich in additives, emulsifiers, and artificial sweeteners that disrupt the gut microbiome — reducing the populations of bacteria that produce serotonin and other mood-regulating compounds. When the gut is dysbiotic (out of balance), the brain feels it. Mood becomes less stable. Anxiety increases. The emotional regulation system that depends on a healthy gut loses its foundation.

This is not a metaphor. It is a physiological mechanism, and it is one of the most significant discoveries in nutritional psychiatry in the last two decades.

2. Mineral depletion.

The processing that makes ultra-processed foods shelf-stable, hyper-palatable, and convenient also strips them of minerals. Magnesium, copper, manganese, and zinc — among others — are lost in refining, bleaching, and high-heat processing, sometimes at rates of 70-90%.

These minerals are not optional. They are required for the basic chemistry of mood.

Magnesium is a cofactor in over 300 enzymatic reactions, including the production of serotonin and dopamine. Copper and manganese support neurotransmitter pathways and protect neurons from oxidative stress. Zinc regulates the stress response and is involved in the signaling between brain cells. When

these minerals are chronically low — as they often are in people eating diets high in ultra-processed foods — the downstream effects show up not on a blood test but in how a person feels: foggy, flat, anxious, irritable, depleted.

Many families chasing energy, focus, and emotional balance are unknowingly running on mineral-deficient fuel.

3. Chronic inflammation.

Ultra-processed foods are consistently associated with elevated inflammatory markers in the blood. Additives, refined oils, and added sugars all contribute to a low-grade, systemic inflammatory state that researchers increasingly identify as a key driver of depression.

Inflammation crosses the blood-brain barrier. It alters how the brain processes emotion, disrupts sleep, blunts motivation, and interferes with the very neurotransmitter systems that regulate mood. A brain under chronic inflammatory load is not a brain that feels well — regardless of what else is happening in a person's life.

Your gut makes 90% of your serotonin. Ultra-processed foods disrupt the bacteria that produce it. The connection between your plate and your mood is not a wellness trend. It is physiology.

It Starts Early

The mental health data does not start in adulthood. It starts young. (*This is why I teach the Freedom Kitchen Kids program.*)

Research on preschool children found that higher ultra-processed food intake at age three was associated with more behavioral and emotional problems by age five. In adolescents, higher ultra-processed food consumption is associated with elevated rates of depressive symptoms, anxiety, hyperactivity, and inattention.



One prospective study found that ultra-processed food intake in early childhood predicts hyperactivity and inattention symptoms in adolescence.

For parents watching a child struggle with mood, focus, or behavior — and wondering why — this data is worth sitting with. It does not mean food is the only factor. It means food is a factor that is almost never part of the conversation.

Even in families eating what most people would consider a reasonably healthy diet — *whole grain crackers, flavored yogurts, protein bars, granola, fruit pouches* — ultra-processed foods are often present in quantities that accumulate. The issue is rarely the obvious junk food. It is the products that pass as normal.

What Minerals Have To Do With it

This is where the conversation gets personal.

The mineral depletion pathway matters not just as a population-level statistic but as an individual reality. Two people can eat similar diets and have very different mineral levels depending on their genetics, stress load, digestive health, and how long their diet has been depleted. The symptoms of mineral insufficiency — fatigue, mood instability, brain fog,

poor stress tolerance, disrupted sleep — are some of the most common complaints. Adults routinely dismiss these symptoms as "just stress" or "just aging." But these same symptoms affect our kids because it's not "aging," it's depletion.

Knowing your mineral picture is one of the most direct ways to understand what is happening in your own body and why you feel the way you feel. It is the difference between guessing and knowing.

The Mood, Minerals, and More program was built around exactly this question. It starts with a simple, done at home, lab test that measures your actual mineral levels, and uses those results to guide real, practical changes — for the whole family — with a food-first approach to better health. This is highly effective at improving health and mood!



In the next issue we will dive deeper into the use of glyphosate and how we can test for that with a Glyphosate and Gut Health program.

Awareness is Key

This magazine does not exist to make you feel bad about what is in your pantry. It exists to give you information the food system would prefer you not have — and to show you, one season at a time, what real food looks and tastes like.

You cannot choose differently until you see clearly. And most families have never been shown, directly, that the connection between ultra-processed food and mental health is this documented, this significant, and this actionable.

Now you have been.

The rest of this issue will inspire you. The pages are full of berries: grown in soil, ripened in sunlight, carrying the minerals your mood depends on. The recipes are simple. The activities are for the whole family.

Let's gather around the kitchen table and become conscious of our food.

“What food did you grow up believing was healthy?”

What is one action you can take this week?

BY THE NUMBERS

- 53% higher odds of depression and anxiety in high UPF consumers
- 44% higher odds of depressive symptoms
- 48% higher odds of anxiety symptoms
- 22% increased risk of future depression (prospective studies)
- 28% faster cognitive decline when more than 20% of daily calories come from UPFs
- 90% of the body's serotonin is produced in the gut — which UPFs disrupt
- 70–90% of key minerals can be lost in the refining and processing of whole foods

A NOTE ON THE EVIDENCE

The studies cited in this article come from systematic reviews and meta-analyses of large observational populations. Observational research shows association, not definitive causation — confounding by overall diet quality, lifestyle, and socioeconomic factors is real and acknowledged by the researchers. What is notable is the consistency: across different countries, populations, and methodologies, the direction of the evidence is the same. For clinical decisions, always work with a qualified practitioner.



Backyard Berries

Why Every Family Deserves a Little Berry Patch

There is something deeply hopeful about watching a child walk into the backyard with a bowl in their hand and come back ten minutes later with stained fingers and a smile.

For years, my children went berry picking with their grandparents every summer. It became part of the rhythm of childhood — warm July mornings, overflowing buckets, berry-stained shirts, my mom's homemade berry cream pies cooling on the counter. Those memories felt tied to country living somehow. I assumed berry patches belonged to people with acreage, barns, or sprawling gardens somewhere “up north.”

It never occurred to me that I could grow berries myself while living in the city.

And honestly, that realization changed something for me.

One small raspberry patch in the corner of our backyard now brings me weeks of joy every single summer. The canes return faithfully each year, stronger and fuller than the year before. By mid-summer, the bushes are heavy with fruit, and I find myself stepping outside throughout the day just to pick “a few more.”

A few more quickly become bowls overflowing on the kitchen counter. Fortunately, I like to bake.

I make raspberry buckles and cobblers weekly during peak season. Some berries make it into jam jars. Some get frozen for smoothies and winter baking. But many never even make it inside. I invite the neighborhood kids over to pick them because there is something beautiful watching kids pick berries.

I wish every family had this experience. And I only wish I would've planted my berries when my kids were younger.

The truth is — you do not need much space, they don't take much maintenance, and it's a low cost to start. (You may even find a local family that wants to thin out their bushes who will give you some root stock.)

Raspberries, blackberries, blueberries, and strawberries are surprisingly generous plants. Once established, they ask for very little while giving back year after year. My raspberries provide far more joy than the amount of square footage they occupy.

A narrow fence line works.

A sunny corner works.

Even a few containers can work for strawberries.

That tiny patch has become part of our family culture.

Growing even a small amount of food changes your relationship with food itself. It slows you down. It connects children to seasons. It creates abundance in a way a grocery store never quite can.

My grandkids will know when the berries are ready.

They will know what fresh raspberries taste like warm from the sun.

And they will know food can come from your own backyard.

If you have ever thought:

“We don't have enough room.”

“I'm not a gardener.”

“That's for people with farms.”

I hope this article changes your mind



Each year, the Environmental Working Group releases its “Dirty Dozen” list — produce found to carry the highest levels of pesticide residue.

Strawberries consistently rank near the top of the list. Blackberries and blueberries now appear on the list as well. While raspberries didn't make the Dirty Dozen, they also did not make it on the Clean 15. Buy organic berries!

Maybe this is one more reason to plant a few berry bushes of your own.

Even a small backyard patch can provide bowls of fresh berries all summer long — and the peace of mind that comes from knowing exactly how they were grown.

the way mine was changed.

Because a berry patch is more than food.

There is nothing like stepping outside barefoot and picking berries that ripened overnight, watching the neighborhood kids gathered around bushes, and appreciating the abundance of nature.

And one day, years from now, your children may hold fond memories of berry picking, like my kids do. Those moments with my parents left an indelible mark on their childhood.

Not something they bought. *But something they did together.*

Growing Berries For Food and Profit

What If Your Garden Paid You Back?

Most families grow food to eat it. That is the right reason. But berries are one of the few crops where the math also works in your favor — where a small investment of space and time can generate real income, teach real skills, and turn a backyard patch into something that actually pays.

This is not a fantasy. Berries are among the highest-value crops per

square foot in small-scale agriculture. They require no tractor, no barn, and no commercial irrigation system. A family with a 10x20 foot plot, a small investment to start, and the willingness to show up consistently can grow enough to eat well and sell the surplus.

For young growers especially — and you will meet some of my young growers in this and future

issues — berries are one of the most accessible entry points into food entrepreneurship. You do not need a farm to be a farmer. You need a plan, the right plants, and someone willing to buy what you grow.

Not every berry is equally suited to small-scale profit. Here is an honest look at four worth considering.

Feature	Strawberry	Raspberry	Blackberry	Blueberry
Space Needed	1–2 sq ft per plant	2–3 ft apart in a row	3–4 ft apart in a row	4–5 ft apart, 2 varieties
Time to First Harvest	Same season	Year 2	Year 2	Year 3–5
Yield Per Plant / Year	1–2 lbs	1–2 lbs	2–4 lbs	5–10 lbs (mature)
Average Retail Price	\$4–6/lb	\$5–7/lb	\$4–6/lb	\$5–8/lb
100-Plant Estimate	\$400–600/season	\$500–700/season	\$800–1,200/season	Slow start, strong long-term
Best for Beginners?	Yes — fastest return	Yes	Yes	Patient growers
Container Friendly?	Yes	Limited	No	Yes (large pot, 2 varieties)
Perennial?	Replant every 3–4 years	Yes	Yes	Yes — 20+ year lifespan

Rough Numbers for Young Growers

A 10x20 foot bed of strawberries — about 100 plants — costs roughly \$50–100 to plant and can yield 100–200 pounds of berries in a season. At \$5 per pound at a farmers market, that is \$500–1,000 in revenue from one bed in one season.

After costs, a young grower managing their own planting, harvesting, and sales could net \$300–700 from a single season's effort. That is a meaningful number for a teenager — and a powerful lesson in what work connected to real food can produce.

Blueberries require more patience. The plants take three to five years to reach full production. But a mature blueberry bush produces for twenty years or more, and high-quality local blueberries command some of the highest prices at any farmers market. Plant them now. They are an investment.

Get Started

If you are beginning this season, start with strawberries. Buy bare-root plants or plugs from a local nursery or reputable online supplier. Plant them in well-amended soil with full sun and consistent moisture. Mulch

with straw to suppress weeds and retain water.

Harvest daily when the season peaks. Berries left on the plant overripen quickly. Pick them, price them fairly, and bring them to your table — or your market stand — while they are at their best.

Berries do not wait. Neither should you.



Learn to make Jam 3 ways!

Watch the classroom video at freedomkitchenkids.com

Summer ADVENTURES

"The best memories are
made outdoors with
good food and
good company."



Favorite Picnic Places

Where do you like to go on a picnic?
Check all your favorite places!

- ☐ My backyard
- ☐ At the lake
- ☐ Hiking in the woods
- ☐ The beach
- ☐ A mountain overlook
- ☐ A park
- ☐ A friend's house
- ☐ Somewhere new!

Where else do you like to go?

What's in Your Picnic Basket?

What do you pack for the perfect picnic?
List your go-to foods!

What Food Made Everyone Happy?

What dish or snack disappears
first at every picnic?

What Recipe Should Become a Family Tradition?

What recipe do you want to make every
summer for years to come?

My Summer Adventure Plans

One place I want to go: _____

One thing I want to try: _____

One memory I want to make: _____

Remember...

Simple food.
Fresh air.
Good people.
The best days.

Raspberry
Buckle

Buckwheat
Wraps

Power Bowl with
Roasted Chickpeas



Grow a Pollinator Garden

The Bees That Make Your Berries Possible

In the Spring issue, we talked about what is happening to pollinators at scale — the almond-bee dilemma, colony collapse, and the commercial beekeeping industry pushed to its limits to feed a food system built on monocultures. That is the big picture. This page is about what you can do in your own backyard.

Here is the connection that makes this personal: every berry in this issue exists because a pollinator showed up.

Strawberries, blueberries, raspberries, blackberries — they all require insects to transfer pollen from flower to flower before a single fruit forms. No pollinators, no harvest. When you grow a pollinator garden alongside your berry patch, you are not just doing something nice for bees. You are actively participating in your own food production.

That is a conversation worth having at the kitchen table.

What to Plant

Choose a mix of bloom times so something is always flowering from June through September.

Flowers

- **Lavender** — bees flock to it; drought-tolerant once established
- **Coneflower (Echinacea)** — native, long-blooming, attracts bees and butterflies
- **Black-eyed Susan** — native, easy, no-fail for beginners
- **Zinnias** — kids love growing them; butterflies follow
- **Borage** — star-shaped blue flowers; bees love it; self-seeds every year
- **Sunflowers** — pollen-rich; attracts bees, butterflies, and birds

Herbs

- **Basil** — let a few plants flower; bees will find them within hours
- **Thyme** — beautiful when blooming; one of the best bee plants you can grow

- **Mint** — spreads aggressively, so keep it in a container; pollinators love the flowers

Shrubs

- **Elderberry** — supports pollinators in spring and produces berries in late summer. (Look for Elijah's elderberry syrup recipe in the Fall issue.)
- **Spirea** — long bloom time; reliable pollinator habitat
- **Native viburnum** — excellent choice for Michigan and Midwest gardens

Start this Weekend

Plant one flowering herb — basil, thyme, or borage — in a pot near your berry container or garden bed. Water it. Let it flower when it's ready. Then watch what arrives.

That is the whole lesson. Pollinators need flowers. Berries need pollinators. Flowers need you to plant them.

Your garden is part of the food system.

The Family Discussion

Ask your kids: Where does a strawberry come from before it becomes a strawberry?

Most will say the garden, or the store. The fuller answer is: a bee visited the flower first. Pollinators are not decoration. They are infrastructure. The Spring issue showed us what happens when that infrastructure breaks down at scale. This summer, we build a small piece of it back — one garden bed, one pot, one flower at a time.



Fruit Snack Fraud

What's Really in the Bag?

Fruit snacks began as trail food for hikers

In the 1970s, Louis Shalhoub developed a lightweight, calorie-dense fruit leather for hikers who needed portable energy. By the 1980s, General Mills had acquired the concept, coined the term “fruit snack,” and placed it into American children’s lunchboxes — not as trail food for adults, but as an everyday staple for kids. By the 1990s, Gushers, Fruit Roll-Ups, and Fruit by the Foot had added liquid centers, peel-out shapes, and cartoon characters.

The candy had found its costume. And it has been wearing it ever since.

Ingredient List Is Missing Fruit

Pick up any leading brand of fruit snacks and read the ingredient list — not the front of the package, the actual list. Here is a translation of what you will find:

The first ingredient is corn syrup. That is concentrated glucose — a refined sugar. The second is sugar. The third is modified corn starch — a thickener that creates the gummy texture. Then comes apple or pear juice concentrate, which sounds like fruit but functions in the body as another form of added sugar, stripped of the fiber that makes whole fruit behave differently in the bloodstream.

After that: acids for tartness, pectin or gelatin for texture, natural or artificial flavors, colors, and vitamin C — added at the end of manufacturing, not preserved from any fruit that was ever in the product.

A UK study of children’s food products found that fruit snacks had the highest average sugar content of any category examined — 48 grams of sugar per 100 grams — while many still carried “5-a-day” fruit and vegetable claims on the front of the package. Three-quarters of products making those claims did not contain the recommended portion of actual fruit or vegetables. The fruit imagery on the box is not a description of what is inside. It is marketing.

	1 CUP FRESH STRAWBERRIES	1 POUCH FRUIT SNACKS
Calories	49	80
Sugar	7g (naturally occurring)	11g (added)
Fiber	3g	0g
Vitamin C	89mg (naturally present)	Added as ascorbic acid
Water	91%	0%
Minerals	Yes — manganese, potassium, copper	Trace or none
Ingredients	Strawberries	Corn syrup, sugar, starch, concentrate, dyes, flavoring

Three Red Flags

These appear on fruit snacks and dozens of other products marketed to children as “fruit” or “healthy.” Once you see them, you cannot unsee them.

▶ #1 Corn Syrup Listed First

When sugar leads the ingredient list, the product is built on sugar — regardless of what the front of the package says.

▶ #2 Fruit Juice Concentrate

Concentrate is sugar with the water removed. It does not behave like whole fruit in the body. It is not a serving of fruit.

▶ #3 Added Vitamin C Claims

Vitamin C is added during manufacturing to create a “good source of vitamin C” claim — not because any real vitamin C survived the processing. This is a legal move, not a nutritional one. Regulators call it the “jelly bean rule”: you cannot add vitamins to candy and call it a health food. Fruit snack companies have been sued for exactly this.

Whole fruit behaves differently in the body because it comes packaged with fiber, water, minerals, and plant compounds that slow digestion and support satiety. Fruit snacks remove that

structure while keeping the sweetness — creating a product engineered for shelf life and repeat consumption rather than nourishment.

The Question Worth Asking

If the front of the box said “sugar-starch gel with fruit flavor and vitamin C” instead of “fruit snacks,” would you put it in the lunchbox?

The ingredient list already says that. It just requires someone to translate it.

That is what food literacy is for.



Fruit Snack Detective

The Berry Imposter

A CLOSER LOOK

Most fruit snacks are less like strawberries and more like gummy candy.



- ☒ No whole fruit
- ☒ No fiber
- ☒ Added sugars
- ☒ Artificial dyes
- ☒ Engineered to last



MADE WITH REAL FRUIT JUICE?

NO FIBER

CORN SYRUP FIRST INGREDIENT

SHELF STABLE FOR A YEAR?

WOULD A STRAWBERRY SURVIVE THAT LONG?



"These fruit flavored snacks are made with real fruit juice and other natural flavors."

Nutrition Facts

22 servings per container
Serving size 1 pouch (23g)

Amount per serving
Calories 80

	% Daily Value*
Total Fat 0g	0%
Saturated Fat 0g	0%
Trans Fat 0g	
Cholesterol 0mg	0%
Sodium 15mg	1%
Total Carbohydrate 19g	7%
Total Sugars 9g	
Includes 7g Added Sugars	14%
Protein 0g	
Vitamin C 54mg	60%

Not a significant source of dietary fiber, vitamin D, calcium, iron and potassium.

*The % Daily Value tells you how much a nutrient in a serving of food contributes to a daily diet. 2,000 calories a day is used for general nutrition advice.

Ingredients: Corn Syrup, Sugar, Modified Corn Starch, Pear Juice Concentrate, Apple Juice Concentrate, Carrot Juice Concentrate, Contains 2% or less of: Citric Acid, Vitamin C (ascorbic acid), Sodium Citrate, Fruit Pectin, Malic Acid, Color (vegetable juice, fruit juice, annatto extract, sunflower oil), Natural Flavor, Carnauba Wax.

† Adds a Trivial Amount Of Fat



We welcome your questions and comments
generalmills.com
1.800.328.6856

THE MARKETING TRICK

Why it looks like fruit, but behaves like candy.

DECONSTRUCTING THE INGREDIENT LIST

Corn Syrup, Sugar, Modified Corn Starch,

Pear Juice Concentrate, Apple Juice Concentrate, Carrot Juice Concentrate,

Contains 2% or less of:
Citric Acid, Vitamin C (ascorbic acid), Sodium Citrate, Fruit Pectin, Malic Acid, Color (vegetable juice, fruit juice, annatto extract, sunflower oil), Natural Flavor, Carnauba Wax.

† Adds a Trivial Amount Of Fat

1 The first two ingredients are different types of sugar.

2 These are juices from concentrate. Mostly used for sweetness and flavor.

3 A long list of "extras" for color, flavor, texture, and shelf life—not for nutrition. Some even contain food dyes.



THE TAKEAWAY

The first ingredients tell the real story. When several sweeteners are used, it's easy to hide just how much sugar is in a product.

Real fruit doesn't come with a label.





THE MARKETING TRICK

Fruit snacks use the same imagery as real fruit to sell you a lie.



FRUIT SNACKS



GUMMY CANDY

Look familiar?

REAL FRUIT vs. FRUIT SNACKS

STRAWBERRIES



- ✓ Fiber
- ✓ Vitamin C
- ✓ Water
- ✓ Polyphenols
- ✓ Antioxidants
- ✓ Naturally perishable

WHAT
IS SIMILAR
IS NOT
THE SAME.

FRUIT SNACKS



- ✗ Corn syrup
- ✗ Sugar concentrate
- ✗ Gelatin / starch
- ✗ Dyes / flavoring
- ✗ Ultra-processed
- ✗ Engineered shelf life

DID YOU KNOW?

The average fruit snack can sit on a store shelf for 12 months or more. Real fruit? Days.



DAYS

VS.



12+ MONTHS

LABEL DETECTIVE

Can you find these on the label?

- ☐ Corn syrup
- ☐ Fruit juice concentrate
- ☐ Added sugar
- ☐ Artificial dye
- ☐ How much fiber is in one serving?

_____ g

THE BIG QUESTION

Would this grow on a farm?



BETTER CHOICES THAT GROW

Real food. Real ingredients. Real fuel for growing kids.



Fresh berries



Freeze-dried berries



Dried fruit



Fruit leather

Make it simple.
Make it real.
Make it matter.

Feed the future.

Lydia's Handmade

As a little kid I had always looked for ways to make money. I would braid string into bracelets for a quarter each. Bracelets had been a successful business and at nine years old, five dollars seemed like a huge profit. Nowadays, I have found other ways to make a quick buck. I have been sewing since I was eleven. My grandma gave me a sewing machine for my thirteenth birthday and since then, I have created a small business and it has been doing very well.

On my sewing machine I make pencil cases, make up pouches, and mini draw string bags. I make 18" doll clothes, cross body bags, small reusable bags, children's clothing, teen girls clothes, decorative embroidery, and many other useful items.

Mrs. Lisa from Freedom Kitchen holds kids business fairs every season. I have been attending as a vendor for two years now. My little business, Lydia's Handmade has been very successful. Over the years I have learned that all your pieces will sell, though it may take a couple craft sales till the right buyer comes along. One time I made a 18" doll uniform based on the Harry Potter films. It took three craft sales till a little girl bought the outfit.

To anyone who wants to start a business, patience is the key to any project. Patience and hard work will help your business prosper. The goals I set for my business are simple.

1. Create a business logo and flyers. I highly recommend using an app called Canva.
2. Decide what to make for each craft sale based on what sold the best in the previous craft sale.
3. Advertise with flyers and spread the word.
4. Have fun!

Best wishes for your business,
Lydia's Handmade

Young Growers

The future belongs to those who can create

There is a question we ask often in Freedom Kitchen:

What are you growing?

Not just in a garden.

We mean:

What are you building with your hands?

What are you creating?

What are you learning deeply enough to teach?

Because the future does not belong to passive consumers.

It belongs to creators.

Lydia sews, embroiders, and upcycles clothing into handmade pieces worth wearing again. Eli handcrafts electroculture rods and teaches others about gardening and soil health. Rachel grows flowers and turns them into dried floral art. She will be featured in our Fall issue.

Different interests. Same spark:

They are not waiting for the world to hand them purpose.

They are creating it.

Freedom Kitchen will continue featuring young growers, makers, photographers, bakers, gardeners, and entrepreneurs throughout future issues — students like Madelyn, Elijah, Sam, and others who are learning not only how to create, but how to teach other kids to create too.

Because something powerful happens when children realize:

"I can make something valuable."

And that changes everything.

Watch videos of these kids and the Freedom Kitchen Kid's Markets on the @freedomkitchenkids Facebook page





Eli's Electroculture Rods



Different sizes of an Electroculture rod

1. Mini rod - covers a pot up to six inches in diameter (no stick, only a spiral of wire)
2. Pot rod - covers a pot up to eighteen inches in diameter
3. Small rod - covers a small garden bed up to four feet
4. Large rod - cover a small garden up to ten feet

How to make an Electroculture rod

1. Buy needed materials - magnetized copper wire and beads
2. Find sturdy sticks - eight inch stick for a pot rod, sixteen inch stick a small rod, and three and a half feet or more for large rods
3. Create the spiral then wrap the wire around the desired length of stick clockwise (if you are looking at it from the top of the stick)
4. Add desired beads or decoration (optional)

Electroculture facts:

- The bigger the rod the more area it covers
- It makes the plant stronger so that it can defend itself from insect destruction and infestation
- Your neighbors might like you more for having beautiful plants and decorations

How to use Electroculture rods.

1. Place the rod in the soil securely while avoiding the roots of the plant
2. Ensure that the rod is placed in the soil straight up
3. Take care of the plant as you usually would
4. Enjoy your beautiful plant

Doing your own research and making sure you buy the right kind of copper may be overwhelming. If you need help with Electroculture, I am here. If you don't want to make your own Electroculture rods, you can support my kid owned business by reaching out through email at elibeard77@icloud.com

Have fun growing your plants and enjoy the beauty of nature.

Do you ever wish you could be surrounded by beautiful, healthy plants? I know my mom has, and that wish has come true with just one simple tool... Electroculture rods.

What are Electroculture rods, you may be wondering? Electroculture rods are sticks with magnetized copper wire wrapped around it with a spiral at the top. It draws energy from electromagnetic currents and the atmospheric energy which strengthens the soil and plant growth. It reminds me of Nikola Tesla's free energy machine.

There are many ways to help a plant get healthier. I prefer electroculture rods because it does not take continuous work, it does not harm the plant in the long run, it is cost effective to get, and it is also a nice decoration.

Why is it important to have healthy plants and terrain? The terrain is a very important factor. Having healthy soil means having a resilient plant. Unhealthy plants are susceptible to bugs and illnesses.

Electroculture was invented by a popular French scientist named Mr. J. Christoffeau in 1749. He devoted years of scientific research into this study. The positive energy goes into the soil to make plant growth stronger. The Electroculture rods are very simple to make and are a nice decoration. You only need three ingredients, a stick, magnetized copper wire, and beads for decoration. Here is what you need to know to get started:





What Happened to Ice Cream?

And Where to Find the Real Thing

Ice cream used to have four ingredients. Cream. Eggs. Sugar. Flavor — a real one, like vanilla bean or crushed strawberries from a farm. That was it. Every grandmother knew how to make it. Every child understood what it was.

Then the food industry got involved.

Cream is expensive. Eggs require handling. Both have a short shelf life. So manufacturers began a quiet substitution — replacing the costly, perishable ingredients with cheaper, shelf-stable alternatives. Vegetable oils in place

of cream. Emulsifiers in place of eggs. Gums and stabilizers to mimic the texture that fat and protein once created naturally.

The result is a product that looks like ice cream, is stored next to ice cream, and is marketed as ice cream — but is legally not allowed to be called ice cream.

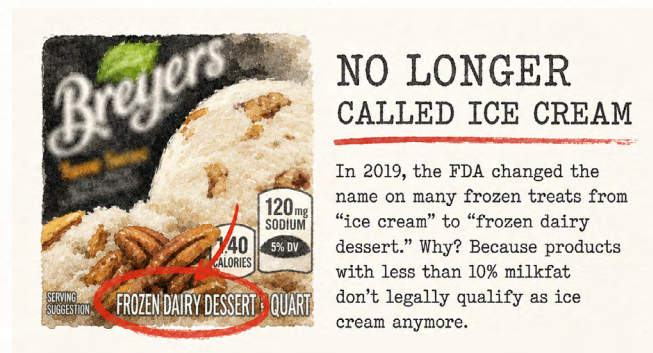
The FDA has a standard of identity for ice cream. It must contain at least 10% milkfat and follow specific composition rules. Products that do not meet this standard must use a different name. So

they do. Look for: frozen dairy dessert. Or non-dairy frozen dessert. Or simply frozen dessert.

These names appear in small print on the side of the lid or the back of the carton. The front of the package says “creamy,” “dreamy,” “smooth,” “classic.” The front of the package is not where they tell you what it actually is.

Compare the labels:

Feature	Real Ice Cream	Frozen Dairy Dessert
Base	Cream, skim milk	Skim milk, corn syrup, vegetable oil
Protein / Fat Source	Egg yolks	Mono & diglycerides
Texture	Natural fat & protein	Carrageenan, cellulose gum, polysorbate 80
Color	Natural	Artificial dyes (Red 40, Yellow 5, Blue 1)
Shelf Life	Shorter	Extended
Ingredient Count	4–6 ingredients	15–25 ingredients



Mono and diglycerides are emulsifiers derived from fats — they do what egg yolks do, for less money. Carrageenan is a seaweed extract used to thicken and stabilize. Polysorbate 80 is a synthetic surfactant linked in animal studies to gut microbiome disruption. Cellulose gum is derived from wood pulp.

None of this is what a grandmother put in her ice cream maker.

How to Spot the Difference

Flip the container over before you buy. If the words “*frozen dairy dessert*” appear anywhere — on the lid, the side panel, or in tiny print beneath the product name — it is not ice cream. Put it back.

The brands that still make real ice cream are proud of it. They say so on the front. If a brand is not advertising real cream and real eggs, that is a signal worth noticing.

“What foods in your kitchen deserve a second look?”
Make notes in the margins of foods you want to investigate.



Business Spotlight: Cookies & Cream Ice Cream Shop

Small-Town Scoop, Big Ingredient Standards

At Cookies & Cream in Downtown Lake Orion, one small section of the menu reflects a growing shift toward cleaner ingredients and greater transparency.

The shop offers select cleaner options alongside traditional treats — which is exactly how change often begins (Importantly, not the entire menu is “clean label” so ask for it.)

One standout option is *Simply Supercow* ice cream from Country Dairy, a Michigan dairy known for using recognizable ingredients and plant-based colors instead of synthetic dyes.

Their colorful varieties use ingredients like:

- Spirulina extract
- Turmeric extract
- Beet juice concentrate

Even the rainbow sprinkles are different.

The shop offers organic rainbow sugar strands made without artificial dyes or confectioner’s glaze — a small but meaningful alternative for families trying to reduce synthetic ingredients.

Cookies & Cream also makes many of its cookies and cookie dough in-house using ingredients like:

- Real butter
- Organic flour
- Cane sugar

Owner Alaina Campbell says the goal is not perfection — it’s offering families better options while keeping the fun and nostalgia of going out for ice cream.

The shop also partners with

Michigan-based producers for some of its frozen treats and hosts summer Kids Nights with crafts, games, and family activities.

Businesses like Cookies & Cream reflect a growing consumer shift: families are beginning to ask more questions about ingredients, dyes, sourcing, and transparency — even in desserts.

And that matters.

Because when enough customers ask for cleaner options, more businesses begin offering them.

Find Cookies & Cream in Downtown Lake Orion or follow along at @cookiesandcreamlo.

When You Go Out: Ask for Clean Label

There are ice cream shops making an effort to offer the real thing. Real cream. Real eggs. No artificial dyes. No synthetic flavors. *They exist in most cities — and they are worth finding.*

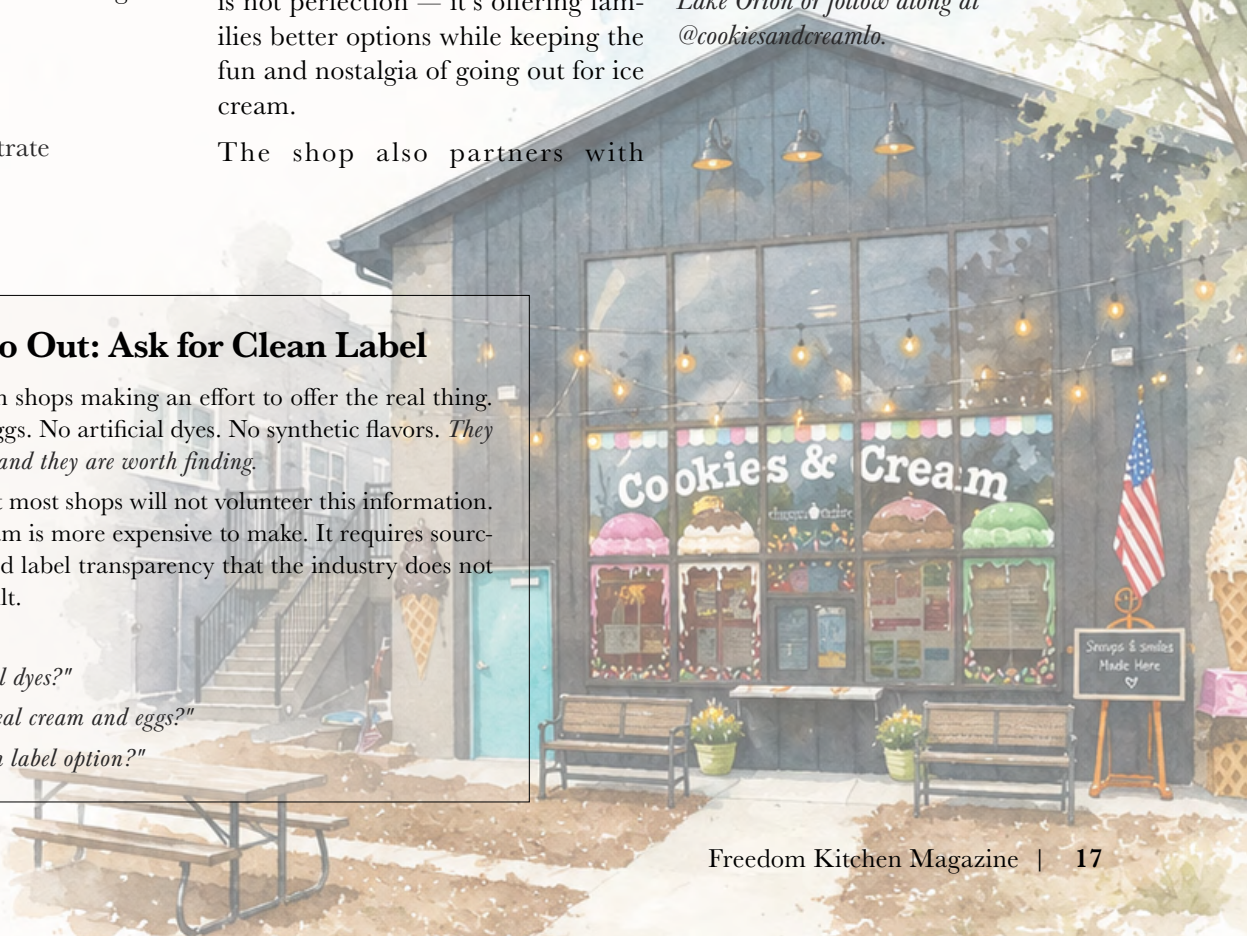
The problem is that most shops will not volunteer this information. Clean label ice cream is more expensive to make. It requires sourcing relationships and label transparency that the industry does not yet reward by default.

So ask.

"Do you use artificial dyes?"

"Is this made with real cream and eggs?"

"Do you have a clean label option?"







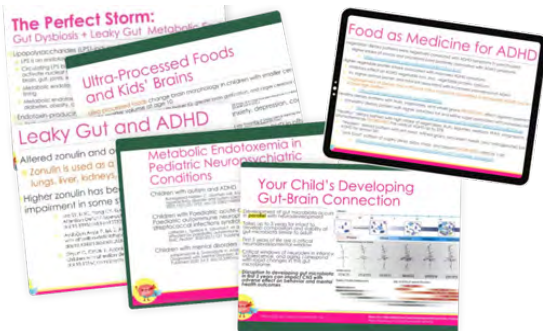
Book Reviews



*I'm curious
what you're reading?*

DM me on Instagram, or send me
a message on Facebook
@freedomkitchenkids

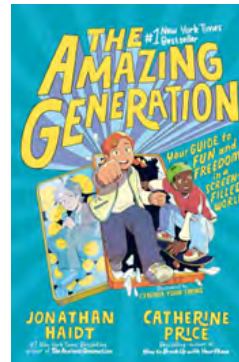
In this digital age, how many of you are still reading books? I'm actually curious what you're reading. **DM me on Instagram, or send me a message on Facebook @freedomkitchenkids**



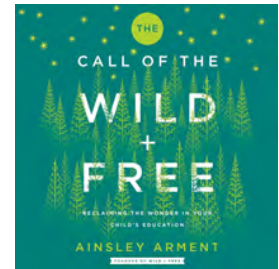
While I do love reading, I spend a lot of time in seminars and courses on nutrition and functional health. I recently attended presentations on gut health and ADD/ADHD. I was reflecting on how we were required to get books to learn new information and now information is everywhere. Webinars, podcasts, and seminars have replaced the time I used to spend with books.

This was a wonderful presentation by Dr. Elisa Song.

I've been writing a book for awhile... and sometimes I wonder who still reads books.



This has been on my list of books to read. I think the *Anxious Generation* was a very important book and I think I've come to the same conclusion as Jonathan Haidt and my cooking classes are a screen-free source of fun and freedom. Has anyone read this yet?



This book was a complete paradigm shift for me and will influence me as I help to raise my grandkids. What other books do you recommend for grandparents stepping into the role of babysitting grandkids?



Brown Betty

4 c	Bread, cubed or chopped small
½ c	Butter, or coconut oil
6 c	Berries (or fruit)
½ c	Sugar, use organic (can use coconut sugar)
1	Lemon, juiced
¼ t	Salt

1. Grease an 8x8 baking dish with butter, coconut oil, or avocado oil spray.
2. Preheat oven to 350.
3. Chop bread into small pieces (or pulse in a food processor).
4. Melt the butter and mix with the bread crumbs.
5. In another bowl toss the berries with lemon juice, sugar and salt.
6. Layer half of the berries in the baking dish, top with half of the bread crumb mixture, then add remaining berries, and the rest of the bread crumb mixture.
7. You may sprinkle the top with a pinch of cinnamon and sugar (optional).
8. Bake 45-50 minutes until golden brown.
9. Let cool a few minutes before serving.

Brown Betty's are typically served with ice cream.

Berry Cobbler



4 c	Berries
1 T	Tapioca starch (or arrowroot starch)
3 T	Maple syrup
2 T	Lemon juice
1 t	Vanilla
	Cobbler Topping
1 c	Almond flour
3 T	Coconut oil
4 T	Maple syrup
¼ t	Almond extract
½ t	Cinnamon
¼ t	Salt

1. Preheat oven to 350. Use a pyrex baking dish or ramekins (in the video I show the use of ramekins)
2. In a bowl combine the berries and all the ingredients for the filling and then pour the filling into your baking dish(es).
3. In the same bowl, you can now combine all the ingredients for the cobbler topping and spoon the topping on top of your berries.
4. Bake 30-40 minutes for a full size baking dish. If baking in ramekins, bake 20-30 minutes. The top should be lightly brown and the filling should be bubbling.

Raspberry Buckle

	Crumb Topping	1	Egg
¼ c	Coconut sugar	1 t	Vanilla
¼ c	GF flour blend	½ c	Milk
1 t	Cinnamon	1 ½ t	Baking powder
3 T	Butter or coconut oil, room temp	¼ t	Salt
	Batter	½ t	Cinnamon
½ c	Organic sugar	1 ½ c	GF flour blend
3 T	Butter or coconut oil, room temp	2 c	Berries

1. Grease an 8x8 baking dish with butter, coconut oil, or avocado oil spray.
2. Preheat oven to 375.
3. In a small bowl, mix together the Crumb Topping. Add the coconut sugar, flour, cinnamon, and then cut-in the butter or coconut oil and smash with a fork until crumbly. Set aside.
4. Get a larger mixing bowl for the Batter.
5. Start by creaming together the sugar and the butter. Use an electric mixer until creamy.
6. Add remaining wet ingredients: egg, vanilla, and milk. Mix again, until creamy.
7. Now add your dry ingredients to the flour: baking powder, salt and cinnamon, and mix together.
8. Slowly add the dry ingredients to the bowl with the wet ingredients.
9. Once well blended, fold in the berries (gently!)
10. Pour the batter into your prepared baking dish. Sprinkle the top with the Crumb Topping.
11. Bake 45-60 minutes until golden brown and toothpick comes out clean.
12. Let cool a few minutes before serving.



Remember to use organic berries



Why Farms Are Offering U-Pick

The Pick-Your-Own Revolution — and What It Means for Your Family

U-PICK



farming. The farms are losing money. The farm families are surviving on off-farm income.

Something had to change.

The Turn

In 2016, Megan planted 800 blackberry plants. Not for the market. For pick-your-own.

The first season she opened, something unexpected happened. Customers arrived to pick blackberries — and immediately started asking when they could pick everything else. The tomatoes. The peppers. The onions. The demand to pick *all of it* caught her entirely off guard.

“I had no idea people were going to be so excited to pick everything.”

So she built on it. Season by season, she and her dad expanded what customers could pick, refined the booking system, figured out the timing, and learned how to host hundreds of people a week on a two-person farm.

Now they run an eight-week season — mid-May through mid-July — with three-hour picking windows, advance ticketing, and market-rate pricing by the pound. Their social media following drives most of their traffic. Word of mouth drives the rest.

The result: **they now make three to**

Megan started farming with her dad in 2012. They grew a diversified mix of fruits and vegetables, took it to farmers markets, sold to restaurants, went wholesale when they had surplus. They worked hard. They grew good food. And they could not make a living.

“We could never turn the corner and become profitable,” she told me. “And we were doing as much as we could. It was just me and my dad.”

In 2016, she came across an article in *Salon* with a title that stopped her: *Nobody told me about small farming — I can’t make a living*. The author had surveyed farmers across her community and applied three simple criteria: no outside job, no unpaid family labor, and at least minimum wage from the farm. She did not find a single farmer who met all three. Less than a year later, she sold her farm.

“It lined up exactly with my experience,” Megan said.

She is not alone. USDA census data on farm household income shows that small farms — those grossing under \$350,000 annually, which represents most farms in America — show negative income from

four times what they earned in their best farmers market year.

Why it Works

The economics of pick-your-own come down to a single insight: *customers do the harvesting*.

The traditional path from farm to payment runs like this — grow, harvest, prep, store, market, deliver, get paid. On a two-person farm, every one of those steps falls on the same two people. There is no efficiency. There is no scale.

Pick-your-own eliminates the middle. Customers arrive, pick, and pay. The farmer grows more because the



farmer is no longer harvesting, prepping, and hauling. Megan now grows triple the plants she did when she was selling at markets — because she has the time to tend them.

“If I had not been selling through pick-your-own, I would have had to pick up and set down 40,000 pounds of food easily ten times before it was sold.”

What Customers Actually Want

Megan surveyed her customers to find out why they were willing to drive up to 30 miles, plan an outing, and spend a morning picking in the Texas heat instead of ordering groceries from their phone.

The number one answer: *supporting local agriculture and having a personal interaction with the farmer.*

Not low prices. Not convenience. Connection.

“People are so starved for access and personal relationships with people who grow their food,” she said. “And the best thing about that is it costs me nothing to provide.”

For Freedom Kitchen families, this data matters. When you take your children to a u-pick farm, you are not just getting fruit. You are giving your child a farmer to know — a person who grows real food, who can answer the question of where a strawberry comes from before the store. That is the kind of education that does not leave.

The Bigger Picture

Megan does not stop at profitability. Her larger argument is about the planet.

Regenerative agriculture — farming that rebuilds soil health, sequesters carbon, and works with natural systems rather than against them — is practiced by roughly 5% of farms. The other 95% rely on practices that deplete soil and release carbon. The barrier to transition is not knowledge. It is economics. Farmers farm the way they farm because it is what pays.

Pick-your-own changes that math. A profitable small farm can afford to farm regeneratively. And a family that visits that farm goes home

knowing a little more about where food comes from — and why it matters. That customer, Megan argues, becomes an advocate. Multiply that by five thousand visitors a summer, and you have the beginning of the consumer demand that makes systemic change possible.

“Imagine if all these people knew the issues, made their voices heard, and demanded better quality food. We have the solution right in front of us.”

It starts with a field of blackberries and a family with a basket.

Watch Lisa’s interview with Megan on YouTube with this QR Code:



MEGAN'S PICK-YOUR-OWN BASICS

Thinking about opening a u-pick operation? Here is how Megan runs hers:

- **Season:** 8 weeks, mid-May through mid-July
- **Hours:** 3-hour picking windows, 1-hour arrival slots (8–9am, 9–10am, 10–11am)
- **Booking:** Advance tickets only — use a booking app to manage capacity
- **Pricing:** Market rate, by the pound
- **Marketing:** Instagram, Facebook, word of mouth
- **Key rule:** Sell fewer tickets than you think you can. It is better to under-book than to have guests arrive with nothing to pick.
- **The secret:** Hospitality matters as much as the produce. People come for the experience. Make it a good one.

Megan's book on building a pick-your-own farm is published by Acres U.S.A. Find her at purelandorganic.com

SUMMER SUPPER, SIMPLIFIED

Summer doesn't need complicated recipes.

Some of the best meals begin with leftovers, a few vegetables, a protein source, and a simple sauce.

Power bowls and wraps are less about following recipes and more about learning a pattern. Once you understand the formula, dinner becomes easier, faster, and more creative.

*Use what
you have.*

GET CREATIVE

The easiest meals are the ones you can throw together.

Start with what is already in your refrigerator and build from there.





BUILD A POWER BOWL

BASE

- Greens
- Rice
- Quinoa
- Roasted potatoes



PROTEIN

- Chickpeas
- Beans
- Chicken
- Salmon
- Tofu



VEGETABLES

- Roasted
- Fresh
- Pickled



FLAVOR

- Herbs
- Nuts
- Seeds
- Ferments



SAUCE

- Tahini
- Vinaigrette
- Yogurt sauce
- Pesto



BUILD A WRAP

WRAP

- Tortilla
- Buckwheat wrap
- Lettuce wrap



PROTEIN

- Chickpeas
- Beans
- Chicken
- Salmon
- Tofu



VEGETABLES

- Roasted
- Fresh
- Pickled



FLAVOR

- Herbs
- Nuts
- Seeds
- Ferments



SAUCE

- Tahini
- Vinaigrette
- Yogurt sauce
- Pesto



→ Want the full Roasted Chickpea Power Bowl recipe?
Turn to page 26.

*There are
no mistakes.
Just new
combinations.*



Roasted Chickpea Power Bowl

INGREDIENTS

- 1 c Broccoli
- ½ c Red onion, sliced
- 1 c Bell pepper, sliced
- 2 c Sweet potato, diced
- 1 Can of Chickpeas
- 1 t Cumin
- 1 t Paprika
- 1 t Chili powder
- ½ t Garlic powder
- ¼ t Red pepper flakes
- 4 T Avocado oil

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Preheat the oven to 350 F and line a large baking tray with parchment paper or you can lightly spray it with avocado oil.
2. Open and drain the can of chickpeas. In a mixing bowl add chickpeas, 1 T of oil, cumin, paprika, chili powder, garlic powder, red pepper flakes and toss. Add them to the baking sheet.
3. Peel and cut sweet potato into small cubes and add to the mixing bowl. Peel and cut the red onion in slices. Take the seed pod out of the bell pepper and slice it. Toss these with 2 T of oil and add to the baking sheet.
4. Wash the broccoli, remove leaves and trim the stems. Toss these with 1 T of oil and add to the baking sheet.
5. Make sure all your veggies are spread out into a single layer. Bake in the preheated oven for 35-40 minutes, until all of the vegetables are cooked through and soft when pierced with a fork.
6. While baking the veggies, make the Tahini Dill Sauce, by combining all the ingredients and either using a whisk or a blender. (It will thicken so adding water will keep it thinner.)



Tahini Dill Sauce

INGREDIENTS

- ½ c Tahini
- ¼ c Water
- 4 T Lemon juice
- 1 Garlic clove
- 1 t Apple cider vinegar
- ¼ t Salt
- 2 T Fresh dill, chopped



watch kids making wraps in class



Buckwheat Wraps

INGREDIENTS

- 220 g Buckwheat flour (~1 ½ cups)
- 15 g Psyllium husk
- 5 g Salt
- 1 T Oil
- 100 g Plain yogurt (dairy free options)
- ½ c Boiling water
- Tapioca flour for rolling
- Olive oil for cooking wraps

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Whisk together all the dry ingredients.
2. Combine the wet ingredients in a separate bowl.
3. Mix the dry and wet ingredients together, with a fork.
4. Once combined, cover and let sit for a few minutes.
5. Use some parchment paper, flour your workspace with tapioca starch.
6. Divide your dough into the number of wraps you are making (5-6 wraps).
7. Roll each ball of dough into a thin round.
8. We will fry these in a skillet with hot oil.
9. Fry 1 at a time, fry each side for about a minute. Put them on a plate when they are finished.



There is a moment in every Freedom Kitchen cooking class when a child tastes something they made from scratch and cannot believe it came from their own hands. That moment is not about the food. It is about competence. And competence — the felt experience of being capable — changes a person.

Research confirms what good teachers already know. Experiential learning produces measurably better outcomes than information alone. A child who cooks a meal retains the lesson differently than a child who reads about nutrition. The Cooking Matters study, which followed over 18,000 participants, validated what Freedom Kitchen has been practicing for ten semesters: cooking class works. Not as entertainment. As education that sticks.

Dr. Elisa Song, pediatric integrative health physician and author of *Healthy Kids, Happy Kids*, has made the case clearly: what children eat directly shapes their brain development, immune function, gut health, and behavior. The science connecting ultra-processed ingredients — refined flour, refined sugar, artificial dyes, synthetic flavors — to ADHD, anxiety, gut disruption, and chronic inflammation is no longer emerging. It is established.

Which is why this needs to be said plainly.

Not all cooking classes are the same.

A cookie decorating class is not a cooking class. A cupcake session at a

bakery is not a cooking class. These are experiences built around refined flour, refined sugar, artificial dyes, and artificially flavored frostings in every color of the rainbow. They are fun. They are also, by the standards of what we now know about children's health, doing harm while calling it a treat.



Freedom Kitchen cooking classes are built on a different foundation entirely. Every recipe uses real ingredients. Every class includes a full hour, with fifteen minutes of intentional food education — label reading, sourcing, nutrition, the difference between food

and a food product. Students learn to cook. They also learn to think.

The results are not subtle. Children who understand where food comes from make different choices. Students who have cooked a real meal are less intimidated by a real kitchen. Families who cook together eat better — and research shows family meals

reduce childhood obesity rates by 40%. These are not small outcomes.

Fall registration is now open.

Freedom Kitchen cooking classes are offered for elementary, middle school, and high school students. Each semester builds on the last. Students who complete multiple semesters emerge with genuine kitchen competence — the kind that follows them into adulthood, into their own homes, and eventually into the kitchens they build

for their own families.

This is not a trend. It is a skill. A necessary life skill.

Register at freedomkitchenkids.com



A Journey to the Village

Episode 2 of our story in Ghana

Written by Juliet Azedi Ajaab, a freelance writer from Ghana.

You can find her at julz360.com

Continued from the last issue:

I woke up to the sound of my twin cousins giggling and running in front of the door. I turned to look at my little brother who was still sleeping. "You are finally awake," Panyin said, peeking through the door. I smiled and nodded. "Kofi is still sleeping though," I said and got off the bed. It felt unusual sharing a room with Kofi but surprisingly I didn't really mind it. At least not yet. Panyin told me his parents had gone to the farm but made breakfast for us. I looked at the time and it was 9am!

The sun was already warm when Kofi woke up and we both went to the kitchen to have breakfast. I sighed as I looked at my phone. The signal bar was barely there, my parents told me the internet wasn't fast here but it was definitely worse than I thought. Kofi was sitting at the low wooden kitchen table, frowning at his tablet. "It's not working," he whined. "I want to watch my cartoons." I reminded him about the network issues and his face fell. I missed the city, the fast internet, and having things to do. We ate our breakfast of warm porridge in silence, wondering how we were going to survive two whole weeks at Uncle Opoku's house.

After breakfast we could hear Panyin and Kakra running around the big compound. They came to the kitchen, breathless and smiling. "Kofi! Come and play Tsaskele with us!" Kakra called out. Kofi looked at his dark tablet screen and then at the twins. "I don't know how to play chaslele or whatever you call it," he said. The twins laughed at his mispronunciation. "We will teach you!

It's very easy!" Kakra said, still giggling. I nodded for Kofi to go and he finally got up and followed them outside. I stayed on the porch for a while, scrolling through my offline photos, but then I heard loud cheering. I looked up and saw the three of them jumping. They each had sticks and were using them to hit tin cans into what looked like an old car tyre. "What type of weird golf is this?" I whispered to myself. Kofi was actually laughing! It seemed he had scored.

It looked interesting so I grabbed my phone and walked into the yard. I started filming them, catching the way the dust rose when they hit their tin cans with the stick and the bright smiles on their faces. Before I knew it, I was laughing too. "Wait, let me try!" I said, tucking my phone into my pocket. I grabbed a stick to have a go. My tin flew way off target and we all laughed. I forgot all about the slow data.

"Hello!" a voice called out from the gate. A girl about my age was standing there, wearing a bright dress and a friendly smile. She greeted the twins and introduced herself to me. Her name was Afia and she lived next door. "I'm Akosua," I said, wiping a bit of sweat from my forehead. I told her we were here on holiday and she was excited to hear about Accra. Afia told me that she had only been to Accra once and she absolutely loved it there though the traffic was unbearable. I laughed and nodded. We chatted for a while and she said she had to head out. "I need to send some items to my mother in the market," she said. She told me about how the market only worked one day in the

week, Wednesdays. The market was always vibrant and full of people from neighbouring villages buying things they needed. It sounded interesting!

"Would you like to come with me?" Afia asked. I hesitated for a second, thinking about the house, but Afia looked like she would be fun to talk to. "Okay, let's go!" I replied, then I told Kofi and the twins to stay within the compound. We walked through the narrow footpaths, passing tall green trees and waving to people sitting in front of their homes. When we reached the market, it was like a different world! There were mountains of bright orange oranges, stacks of colorful cloth, and the smell of spicy fried plantain in the air. After handing over the basket to her mother, Afia and I spent the morning walking through the stalls, chatting about school and life in the city versus the village.

By the time we walked back through the paths, the sun was really scorching. We reached the house just a few minutes before Uncle Opoku and Auntie Mina returned from the farm. Kofi and the twins were inside having a water break. "We are sorry for leaving you all day. I'm sure you were so bored. How about you come with us to the cocoa farm tomorrow?" Auntie Mina asked when she saw us. I looked at Kofi, who was tired but happy. He nodded excitedly. "Wonderful. Now it's time to eat jollof rice and chicken," Auntie Mina announced and everyone cheered. I could feel something change inside us. That was when I realised that I hadn't checked my phone since I put it in my pocket in the morning. **To be continued...**



Grow Salad Mix

Why Salad Mix Is One of the Best Crops You Can Grow in Your Backyard

If you are looking for the most accessible, fastest-returning, highest-margin food crop a backyard grower can start this season, it may not be berries. Berries are worth it, but they take time.

Salad mix is ready in weeks. And the numbers are hard to argue with.

One 50-foot garden bed of mixed lettuce yields at least 30 pounds per harvest. At \$10 per pound — the going rate at most urban farmers markets — that is \$300 from a single bed. Input costs are minimal: seed, soil amendment, water. Margins run at 80% or better. And unlike most crops, lettuce does not require a tractor, a barn, a greenhouse, or years of patience. It requires a bed, some seeds, and consistent attention.

One farmstead grower on YouTube says he sells out every single week. “People love their salads,” he says. “And it tastes nothing like what you can buy in a supermarket.”

Freshly cut salad mix — harvested that morning, not shipped across the country in a sealed plastic container — is a genuinely different product. Readers who have grown lettuce know this. Readers who have not are about to.

Family Math

A small backyard plot with five 50-foot beds — about the size of a single-car garage footprint — can yield 150 pounds of salad mix per harvest cycle. At \$10 per pound, that is \$1,500 in potential revenue from one planting. With succession planting (staggering new seeds every two

weeks), a family can maintain a continuous harvest through the growing season.

Managing this on a part-time basis is realistic. Harvest, wash, and pack on Friday evening. Sell at the Saturday market. Replant when needed. A family with a full-time schedule can run a small salad mix operation in the margins of their week.

For young growers especially, salad mix offers something rare: a fast feedback loop. Plant seeds. Watch them grow. Harvest in 30-45 days. Sell. Reinvest. The cycle is short enough that a young person can see the entire arc of a food business within a single summer.

What to Grow

Not all lettuce performs equally in summer heat. Choose heat-tolerant varieties or your crop will bolt — shooting up to flower and turning bitter — before you can harvest.

Recommended variety types:

- Oakleaf varieties — heat-tolerant, slow to bolt, excellent flavor
- Batavian types — crisphead crosses that handle warm weather well
- Red and green looseleaf mixes — visually striking, popular at market
- Arugula — fast-growing, peppery, adds character to any mix (bolt-resistant varieties available)
- Spinach — grows best in cooler parts of the season; include in spring and fall plantings



Johnny's Selected Seeds or MI Gardener carries excellent heat-tolerant salad mix blends specifically bred for market growers. Their catalogs include detailed variety notes on bolt resistance and harvest windows.

The cut-and-come-again method: Harvest lettuce by cutting leaves 1–2 inches above the crown. The plant regrows and can be harvested again 10–14 days later, giving multiple cuts per planting before the bed needs to be replanted.

Where to Sell

The farmers market is the most obvious outlet — but not the only one.

- Churches and community organizations — a standing weekly order for an organization that serves meals is a reliable, low-effort revenue stream
- Schools and homeschool co-ops — families in educational communities often prioritize local, fresh produce
- Neighbors and neighborhood apps — post once on Nextdoor or your neighborhood Facebook group. A waiting list is not uncommon.
- Direct delivery — a small delivery fee added to orders makes home delivery viable and adds a premium feel

I tell my students, just sell to neighbors. Build up a few customers to get started. Know your market before you plant. If the demand is there, the salad mix will sell itself.

THE NUMBERS AT A GLANCE

Metric	Per Bed	5-Bed Plot
Bed Size	50 feet	250 feet total
Yield Per Harvest	30+ lbs	150+ lbs
Price Per Pound	\$10	\$10
Revenue Per Harvest	\$300+	\$1,500+
Input Cost	Low (seed, soil, water)	Low (seed, soil, water)
Profit Margin	80%+	80%+
Time to First Harvest	30–45 days	30–45 days
Management	Part-time	Part-time

SEED SOURCES: Johnny's Selected Seeds johnnysseeds.com or MI Gardener www.migardener.com

Start your salad mix bed this weekend:

1. Choose a sunny spot — 6+ hours of direct sun daily
2. Amend soil with compost — lettuce is a shallow feeder but rewards good soil
3. Seed densely — broadcast seeds across the bed surface, thin to 4–6 inches as they grow
4. Water consistently — lettuce needs even moisture; inconsistent watering causes bitterness
5. Harvest at 4–6 inches — cut above the crown, leave the roots in place
6. Replant in 2 weeks — succession planting keeps the harvest continuous

Loyal to a Label

Lessons From

Cooking Class

Every year I bring two containers of cocoa powder to cooking class.

One is a familiar brown tin — the kind every American kitchen has seen. The other is Equal Exchange: organic, fair trade, sourced with intention. The kids never know the familiar tin has been refilled. They only know what the label says.

Last semester we made lava cakes. Students broke into small groups, each station stocked with everything they needed. And every single time — without fail — the requests started immediately.

"I want the Hersheys." *"Can we have the Hersheys?"* *"Why did they get the Hersheys?"* *"Can you pass us the Hersheys?"*

No one wanted the Equal Exchange. No one had tasted either. They just knew the name on the tin.

I let them cook. Once the lava cakes went into the oven, the lesson began.

Every Freedom Kitchen class includes at least fifteen minutes of intentional education — label reading, what organic actually means, how to source food, how a homemade version compares to the store-bought equivalent. That day, every student received a foundational lesson on fair trade. The middle schoolers went further — the farmers, the families, the communities built around a single crop. The high schoolers went further still. They watched a news clip. An undercover exposé. Children as young as five years old harvesting cacao for brands sold in every American grocery store. Hersheys was named. The room got quiet.

Then the lava cakes came out of the oven.

Here is what they did not know: every group had been using Equal Exchange the entire time. The

familiar tin was a prop. Every cake in that room was made with fair trade cocoa.

So the question was simple. Did it taste good? Did it taste any different than you expected? Is it possible — given what you now know about how quality ingredients are grown and sourced — that it tasted even better?

The room had to sit with that. They had spent twenty minutes fighting over a label. Then they made something delicious without it.

We also talked about cost — because that is always the next question. Quality ingredients are an investment. In the food. In the farmers who grew it. In your own health. That conversation about what we are willing to pay, and why, is one of the most important ones a young person can have before they are the one doing the grocery shopping.

This is what Freedom Kitchen cooking class is. Not just technique. Not just recipes. A space where food becomes the doorway to critical thinking, leadership, and a more conscious relationship with the world.

We are building that space one class at a time. And we are looking for brands who believe, as we do, that the next generation of conscious consumers learns best in the kitchen — they just need someone to tell them the truth.

To partner with Freedom Kitchen Magazine and reach families ready to learn, contact lisa@freedomkitchen.net



How do we teach kids independence? *Cooking.*

FREEDOM

When children learn to cook with real ingredients,
question what is on a label,
and understand where food comes from —
they make different choices.
For life.

Cookie decorating is not cooking.

CONVENIENCE IS DISGUISED DEPENDENCE.

Our kids are capable of more.

Fall Registration Is Now Open

Elementary • Middle School • High School

www.freedomkitchenkids.com

Watch us on YouTube • @Freedom-Kitchen

There is always room at the table.



FOOD • FREEDOM • FAMILY

Raspberry Buck

2 cups raspberries
3/4 cup organic sugar
1 3/4 cups flour
2 teaspoons cinnamon
6 tablespoons butter
1 egg
1 teaspoon vanilla
1/2 cup milk
1 1/2 teaspoons baking powder
1/4 teaspoon salt



*Food is better shared.
So is wisdom.*

Pass it on.

