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## Exploring Fruit with Freeda the Fabulous Food Detective

Ah May! April showers bring flowers, seasonal fruits start to show up in stores, and tasty breakfast treats are served by grateful families to mothers across the land. Moms certainly deserve deep appreciation for providing all those marvelous meals to their families throughout the year. One Bozeman mom deserves special thanks for getting hundreds of school children excited about eating more - and different - fruits.

"Students loved trying new fruits prepared in new ways during our After School Nutrition Program events in April," says Freeda the Fabulous Food Detective (AKA Cory Talbott, mother of two) with the Montana Student Dietetic Association in Bozeman. "We focus on getting kids excited about exploring new foods, like fruit, and, before they know it, they are eating things that they've refused to even try before. Some active games and a few gold stars go a long way to putting a whole new spin on eating what's good for you."

Supported by kidsLINK, a program of the Greater Gallatin United Way, Freeda the Fabulous Food Detective and her helpers visited seven Bozeman afterschool programs serving over 250 children during the month of April. At each school, kids participated in four stations, including a MyPyramid food relay race, a mystery fruit bag, a read-aloud story, and a delicious tasting station. Each child received a passbook to collect stamps and information on their way to help Freeda discover the fun in fruit.

According to Freeda, fun is the key ingredient in helping kids to try new foods. "We skip nutrition lectures and get kids talking about how different colored fruits keep their bodies strong and healthy. We ask them to be junior detectives to help us figure out what fruits might grow in Montana. They have lots of ideas and questions about what grows in their backyard or on their grandparents' ranch." The lessons were designed to reinforce Bozeman school district's Eat Local effort and to support the Healthy Kids backpacks provided by the Gallatin Valley Food Bank. All recipes featured inexpensive items that kids can make themselves.

Wearing both her mom and Food Detective hats, Cory Talbott has some simple tips for helping your family enjoy more fruits, especially local, fresh, and seasonal items, throughout the year.

- **Get kids excited about choosing new fruits.** Be a food detective at the grocery store - and at the farmers' market this summer. Let kids pick a new fruit -- and ask the produce manager or farmer how to prepare it.
- **Pick different colored fruit for meals and snacks.** Games are fun for families too! Fruits come in beautiful colors and kids can match a fruit color to a day of the week, like red on Monday, blue on Tuesday, and so on.
- **Prepare fruits in different ways.** Fresh, frozen, dried, and canned fruits can be enjoyed in hundreds of ways - whole, sprinkled on cereal, blended in smoothies, mixed into muffins, or tossed in a green salad.

"Moms - as well as dads, grandmas, and grandpas - are children's most important food role models," says Freeda. "If you get excited about enjoying lots of different fruits in different ways, your kids will too!"

Past and current issues of Eat Right Montana's monthly packets can be downloaded for free at [www.eatrightmontana.org/eatrighthealthyfamilies.htm](http://www.eatrightmontana.org/eatrighthealthyfamilies.htm)