



The Paramus Farmers' Market featured special health events from various businesses, including The Valley Hospital. Supplemental guides on healthy eating, summer recipes, food samples, cooking demonstrations and health education were featured throughout June and July. At left, Executive Chef John Graziano of The Valley Hospital (center) cooks healthy dishes on July 16.

PARAMUS

Vendors bring nutritional guidance to Farmers' Market

BY KAREN KLEIMANN
Managing Editor

Health is the word at the Paramus Farmers' Market.

Local vendors have teamed with the borough's Environmental Commission to bring nutritional foods and wellness tips to county residents.

Farmers' Market Manager Dina Burke said she contacted several vendors to bring healthy food and trends to Petruska Park on Wednesdays, including the Paramus Public Library, which provided books, recipes and other reading material on healthy living.

The Bergen County Utility Authority brought composting guides and tips on ways to save the environment. And for those feeling stressed, Massage by Erica provided free chair massages by certified professionals for five to 15 minutes.

The Valley Hospital brought

several events to the market in June and July, providing healthy food samples, cooking demonstrations and summer recipes.

Health educators and dieticians answered questions on health and wellness.

In July, healthy food samples and a cooking demonstration highlighted in-season foods and how to make vegetables and meatless dishes part of a daily diet. Supplemental guides to healthy eating, personalized nutrition counseling, shopping tips, recipe suggestions and proper food proportions were available.

Danielle Cinnante, Community Health Educator at Valley, said the food samples provided on July 9 exposed people to healthier alternatives when making recipes.

"It's about taking out what's bad and incorporating what's good," she said.

For the summer, patrons should incorporate more foods with a

high water percentage, like watermelon, to help with hydration and fullness, she said. In-season fruits and vegetables include grapefruit, strawberries, blueberries, peaches and leafy greens, which contain minerals, vitamins and fiber needed for a healthy diet.

"This is the time to buy them because they are at the peak of ripeness," she said.

Cinnante added that for optimal health, people should limit consuming foods that contain pesticides and preservatives and focus on those that are fresh and minimally processed.

For those who aren't sure where to start, Cinnante said simple steps can be taken to modify recipes to make them healthier. For example, if a recipe calls for white sugar, she said applesauce and honey act as good alternatives while maintaining the desired sweetness of a dish.

The focus of the July 16 cooking demonstration was to try different kinds of vegetables, meatless dishes and use fresh ingredients, like those found at the farmers' market or locally grown, said Joseph Juliano, a registered diet technician and clinical nutrition manager at Valley.

And showing what's in season and not having to rely on pre-made food is what Valley Executive Chef John Graziano had in mind at the cooking demonstration.

He made two different salads using in-season produce like heirloom tomatoes, arugula, spinach

and beets.

The key to making good vegetables is to not overcook them, the chef said.

"Roast, boil or use raw vegetables and fresh herbs – not the dry kind that has been in a cabinet for several years," he said.

For meatless dishes, beans and tofu were recommended to market patrons.

"There is a misconception that to get your daily intake of protein you need to consume red meat," Graziano said. "Protein can be found through plant foods or in other types of meat, like poultry and fish."

Paramus resident Pam Kutoroff said she enjoyed the cooking demonstration and salad samples and found the handouts and tips helpful. The resident came out to the market to get some fresh produce and olive oil. Kutoroff said she feels better when she eats healthy foods.

"I eat healthily, so this is right up my alley," she said.

Janet Brancato, a food and nutrition dietician at Valley, answered questions about maintaining a healthy weight, best foods for staying full and how best to shop for food. She said more fiber and healthy protein helps with food cravings and can help people lose weight naturally. Reading labels for nutritional content, planning meals before going shopping and cooking meals at home more than eating out at restaurants can help people stay on track with their health goals,



MARION BROWN/STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Mia tastes one of the salad samples at the Paramus Farmers' Market on July 16.

she added.

Brancato stressed the importance of hydration.

"Water can help you feel full," she said.

A good rule of thumb is to have four cups per 1,000 calories, she said.

Market patrons asked about other drinks that can help with hydration, besides plain water.

"Flavored water with fruit or seltzer with a splash of juice are good alternatives," Brancato said. "Coffee and tea are hydrating, but they are also diuretics so you'd have to replace those fluids more often."

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Arugula with toasted almonds and farro or spinach with watermelon, beets and feta cheese are two summer salads sampled at the cooking demonstration.

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