

# ROBESON COUNTY

## A PINCH OF FLAVOR

FCS and EFNEP Newsletter



## What's in Season

### This Issue's Tastiest Features

- What's in Season
- LIFT with FCS
- Spinach and Mushroom Produce Highlight
- MED instead of MEDS
- EFNEP 2024 Program Impacts
- FCS Upcoming Programs

### North Carolina

### Spring Fruits and Vegetables

- Collards
- Spinach
- Sweet Potatoes
- Strawberries
- Herbs
- Mushrooms
- Turnips

In February, North Carolina offers a range of fresh, in-season produce, mainly consisting of hearty winter vegetables and a few lingering fall fruits.

**Robeson County Farmers Market Opens May 2025**  
<https://www.robesoncountymarket.com/>

**MED** instead of  
MEDS



# LIFT

(Lifelong Improvements through Fitness Together)

LIFT (Lifelong Improvements through Fitness Together) is a group-based strength training program for adults 55+. The exercises are easily modified to be easier or more difficult, depending on your physical ability. Sessions are held one hour twice a week over the course of four weeks and include a warm-up, strength-training exercises, and a cool down. The classes help participants improve strength and mobility, learn healthy food options, create a habit of physical activity, and most importantly, help form community.

## Wide Leg Squat



- Getting in and out of chairs.
- Getting in and out of bed.
- Picking and lifting objects from the ground.
- Improves mobility for gardening.
- Reaching for objects in stores.

## Knee Extension



- Walking up and down stairs.
- Driving (moving between accelerator and break).
- Putting your pants on.
- Walking dog.
- Improving mobility to leave house quickly in case of emergency.

## Toe Stand



- Walking up and down stairs.
- Mowing the lawn.
- Driving.
- Vacuuming and sweeping floors.
- Showering.
- Walking dog.

**LIFT classes will be held every Wednesday and Friday  
starting March 5 and ending March 28**

**Time: 10:00 a.m. to 11:00 a.m.**

**Located: 455 Caton Drive, Lumberton, NC**

## Introduction to the Med Way

# 7 Simple Steps to Eating the Med Way

These simple steps will help you eat the Med Way every day



### Change your protein

- Replace some of the meat in your diet with plant proteins such as beans, nuts, and seeds often.
- Eat fish and seafood at least two to three times per week. Include fatty fish such as mackerel or salmon at least once a week. Eat fried fish only occasionally.
- Choose white-meat poultry such as turkey or chicken breast.
- Limit red meat and/or choose lean red meat.
- Greatly limit or eliminate processed meats.



### Swap your fats

- Choose olive oil.
- Replace solid fats such as butter or margarine with olive oil or canola oil.
- Use olive oil for cooking, in dressings, and marinades.
- Aim to consume at least four tablespoons of olive oil per day, while keeping within your calorie budget.



### Eat more vegetables

- Get at least three servings (three cups) of vegetables per day.
- Choose a variety of colors.
- Eat more dark green leafy vegetables such as collards, kale, spinach, chard, and turnip greens.







## Eat more fruit

- Get at least two servings (two cups) of fruits per day.
- Choose a variety of colors.
- Include berries often.



## Snack on nuts and seeds

- Choose at least three ounces (three small handfuls) of nuts and seeds per week, while keeping within your calorie budget.
- Avoid candied, honey-roasted, and heavily salted nuts and seeds.



## Make your grains whole

- Eat grains as grains.
- Choose whole grains such as oatmeal, quinoa, brown rice, and popcorn.
- Look for “whole” in the first ingredient on the ingredient list (e.g., “whole wheat”) when choosing bread, pasta, and other grain-based foods.



## Rethink your sweets

- Limit your sugar intake.
- Choose no more than three servings per week of high-sugar foods and drinks such as sugar-sweetened snacks, candies, desserts, or beverages.

# PRODUCE HIGHLIGHT

## SPINACH

### Spinach with Raisins and Pine Nuts



Simply delicious! Add some heat along with the sweet raisins by adding pepper flakes.

### Ingredients

- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- 1 onion, chopped
- ¼ teaspoon red pepper flakes (optional)
- 1 pound spinach
- 2 tablespoons raisins
- 2 tablespoons pine nuts, toasted
- 1 tablespoon lemon juice
- Salt and pepper, to taste

### Spinach with Raisins and Pine Nuts

Serves: 2

Serving size: 1 cup

Prep time: 15 minutes

Cook time: 10 – 15 minutes

Total time: 25 - 30 minutes

### Directions

1. Heat the oil in a large skillet or stir fry pan over medium heat. Add onion and cook for 10-12 minutes. Add pepper flakes (optional).
2. Add the spinach and cook until wilted.
3. Drain if needed and add the raisins and pine nuts.
4. Add the lemon juice.
5. Taste and adjust with salt and pepper.

### Spinach Facts

- Cooked spinach, per cup, provides 129 percent of the recommended daily Vitamin A for women and 105 percent of the suggested amount for men.
- Spinach also provides more of the minerals magnesium, potassium, and iron than cabbage, lettuce, or broccoli.
- The verdant veggie also is rich in phytochemicals – compounds found mostly in plants that have a range of health-boosting properties. They've long been known to function as antioxidants, which help fight inflammation and aging. Researchers have only recently begun to fully explore how they might do even more.
- Spinach is also one of the best plant sources for lutein, a type of plant-based pigment known as a carotenoid that has been linked to better eye and brain health.



# PRODUCE HIGHLIGHT

## MUSHROOMS

### Shaking Portobello Mushrooms



Shaking beef is a very famous Vietnamese dish that gets its American name from the constant shaking of the pan to cook the beef and onions without burning. It is traditionally served on a bed of watercress and with a dipping sauce of lime juice and pepper. This dish borrows from the famous original but uses portobello mushrooms in place of the beef. Since watercress can be very hard to find, you can use arugula or spring mix instead. It is also good served with a bit of brown rice to soak up the juice.

#### Ingredients

- 2 large portobello mushroom caps
- 1 shallot, thinly sliced and separated into rings
- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- 1 tablespoon soy sauce
- 2 teaspoons sugar
- 2 teaspoons black pepper

#### Vinaigrette

- 2 teaspoons rice vinegar
- 1 teaspoon sugar
- 1 teaspoon soy sauce
- Pinch salt
- Black pepper, to taste
- 2 tablespoons olive oil

#### Serve with

- 4 cups Watercress, arugula, or spring mix
- 12 cherry tomatoes
- 1 lime, cut in wedges
- Brown rice, cooked (optional)

#### Shaking Portobello Mushrooms

Serves: 2

Serving size: ½ of recipe

Prep time: 20 minutes

Cook time: 10 minutes

Total time: 30 minutes

#### Directions

1. Remove the dark gills from the underside of portobello mushroom caps using a spoon. Scrape lightly as not to remove any of the flesh.
2. Cut the mushroom caps into ½ -inch cubes.
3. Place the mushrooms in a glass or metal bowl. Add the shallot, oil, soy sauce, sugar, and black pepper. Toss to combine.
4. Marinate for 10-30 minutes.
5. Make the vinaigrette by combining all ingredients in a jar with a tight-fitting lid. Shake well.
6. Drain the mushrooms and shallots and sauté in a non-stick pan until brown.
7. Mix the salad greens and cherry tomatoes with the vinaigrette.
8. Arrange salad on 2 plates.
9. Top with mushrooms.
10. Serve with lime wedges.
11. Serve with brown rice (optional).

### Mushroom Facts

- Mushrooms are naturally low in sodium – an entire cup of white button mushrooms has just five milligrams of sodium. They offer savory flavor that reduces the need for added salt to keep your blood pressure low.
- Mushrooms make an excellent substitute for red meat while minimizing calories, fat, and cholesterol. Research shows that shiitake mushrooms, in particular, help to keep cholesterol levels low. They contain compounds that inhibit the production of cholesterol, block cholesterol from being absorbed, and lower the overall amount of cholesterol in your blood.



## N.C. Cooperative Extension 2024 REPORT


# North Carolina


### Supporting North Carolina's Families with Greatest Needs Since 1969

EFNEP helps address the challenges limited-resource families face when introducing healthy changes through nutrition education, cooking classes, physical activity strategies, and shopping on a limited budget. EFNEP provides:


- Peer-to-peer, hands on education in the community
- Healthy, low-cost recipes
- Simple strategies to help families move more together

### EFNEP Makes a Real Difference

 **96%** of EFNEP participants improved diet quality.

 **80%** now practice daily physical activity.

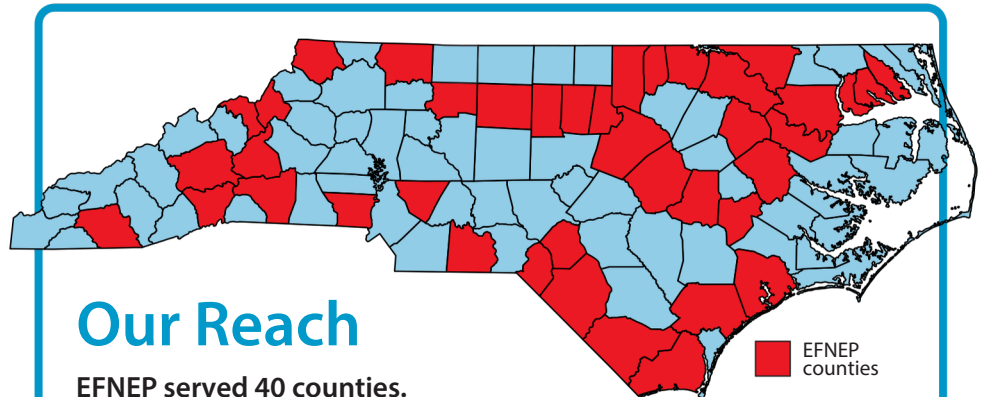
 **94%** practice better food resource management.

 **90%** have improved their food safety habits.

North Carolina EFNEP programs obtained over

**\$668,739**

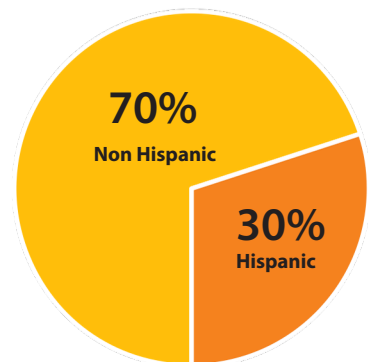
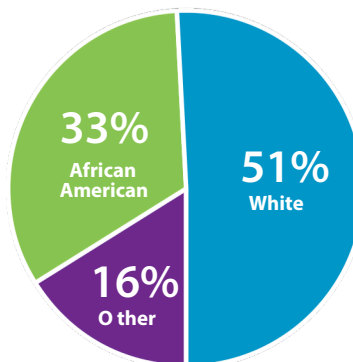
in funding and support from local efforts.



**1,638**  
families enrolled  
in EFNEP.

**15,493**  
youth participated  
in 4-H EFNEP.

### North Carolina EFNEP Reaches Diverse Audiences



### EFNEP Provides Opportunities



**41 jobs**  
supporting the  
local workforce



**1,144** volunteers  
committed  
**9,984** hours



**\$334,364**  
estimated value  
of volunteer  
time



### Robeson County Combating Obesity through Nutrition Education and Play



In Robeson County, over 33 percent of children aged 10–17 are classified as overweight or obese, leading to initiatives promoting healthier lifestyles. The Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP) has partnered with organizations to empower youth with engaging lessons on healthy food choices and physical activity.

EFNEP enrolled 734 youth participants throughout the county. **Reports show that 86% improved diet quality and 62% increased physical activity.** One student noted that playing frisbee brought his siblings together for exercise, enhancing family bonding. Thanks to the dedication of EFNEP educators and enthusiastic youth, Robeson County is witnessing a positive shift toward healthier living.



### Promoting Active Lifestyles in McDowell County

In McDowell County, a group concerned about their sedentary lifestyles engaged with an EFNEP educator through the “Choosing to Move More Throughout the Day” lesson. After a nutritious food demonstration, they explored a nearby walking trail.

**Inspired, they dedicated the last 30 minutes of their meetings to group walks instead of sitting indoors. This change brought joy and led many to include evening family walks in their routines.** One participant noted, “This seems like such a no-brainer; why haven’t we taken advantage of this before now?” Their initiative highlighted how EFNEP can foster healthier habits.



### Stretching Food Dollars: EFNEP’s Impact on Families in Alamance County

The rise in grocery prices has put significant pressure on families, especially those on tight budgets. EFNEP helps educate these families on maximizing their food dollars. In a session titled “Plan: Know What’s for Dinner,” participants learned effective grocery shopping strategies, such as creating specific shopping lists and utilizing “MANAGER SPECIAL” stickers for discounted items.

**One participant, who used to spend over \$200 weekly on groceries, applied strategies and reduced her costs to \$80–\$120 per week.** This savings alleviated financial strain, allowing her to address other family needs. This success story underscores the importance of the EFNEP program in helping Alamance County residents make informed choices and enhance their lives.



[www.ncefnep.org](http://www.ncefnep.org)







## FCS Upcoming Events

### Safe Plates for Food Managers Training Program

Class: March 31 – April 1, 2025 9:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.

Exam: April 4, 2025, 9:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

Registration and fee due by Thursday, March 6, 2024

### LIFT (Lifelong Improvements Through Fitness Together)

Classes will be held every Wednesday and Friday  
starting March 5 and will end March 28

Time: 10:00 a.m. to 11:00 a.m.

Located: 455 Caton Drive, Lumberton, NC

To register use the following link: <https://go.ncsu.edu/liftprogram25>

### Stitchin' With Extension

FEBRUARY 27, MARCH 6, 20, 27 AND APRIL 3 & 10, 2025

3 – 5 OR 6 – 8 p.m.

*THERE WILL BE NO CLASS ON MARCH 13*

*Registration has ended*

### The Sewing Lab

Please make the check or money order payable to N.C. Cooperative Extension, Robeson County Center.

## CONTACT US:



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