

Lights, camera ... vegetables!

By JOHN MATUSZAK - HP Staff Writer | Posted: Tuesday, May 26, 2015 6:00 am

Who says watching the tube can't be good for you?

It can be healthy if you're watching YouTube, specifically videos demonstrating recipes using freshly grown vegetables and herbs.

"The main thing is, it's healthy stuff. It's nutritious," explained Heather Rudnik, a registered dietician with Lakeland Health, producing the videos in partnership with Be Healthy Berrien. "The recipes are healthy, inexpensive, easy and quick."

Most take 30 minutes, tops, Rudnik said - less time than it takes to go through a fast food drive-through.

"And they're good," said Andre Isom, a videographer and the man behind the camera on the project, expressing an enthusiasm usually reserved for less healthy fare.

The videos are mainly directed at customers of the Fruit and Vegetable Delivery Club, a consumer-assisted agriculture program in its first year. The pilot project is being made available to 25 Benton Harbor Bridge card holders, who can have baskets of locally grown food delivered to their homes over 18 weeks.

Using Double Up Food Bucks, large baskets that feed a family of four, are available for \$15 a week, with smaller baskets at \$10.

The Fruit and Vegetable Delivery Club is being supervised through the Berrien County Health Department, using produce grown at Andrews University's Student Gardens in Berrien Springs.

The health department will be managing the Benton Harbor Farmers Market this year, and will coordinate with Andrews University for the second year on a mobile farmers market.

The goal of the programs, funded through grants from the Michigan Department of Community Health



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Photos by Don Campbell / HP staff
Freelance photographer Andre Isom, left, and Heather Rudnik, a registered dietician with Lakeland Health, produce a YouTube video last week on how to make a spring salad. The footage was shot at the Virginia Edwards Community Center in Benton Harbor. Photos by Don Campbell / HP staff
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and Lakeland Health, is to encourage people to eat healthier, reducing obesity and other illnesses. They target low-income residents who have limited access to fresh foods.

Rudnik, who did cooking demonstrations for the mobile market last year, said that customers might not be familiar with some of the items available, or how to cook them.

Isom, who previously managed the Benton Harbor market (his wife, Michelle) agreed that the videos can be an eye-opener.

"I didn't know what kohlrabi was. I didn't know what a beet tasted like before," Isom said. With Rudnik's recipes "it came to life."

YouTube seemed like the best platform to reach customers, said Isom, who has experience as a musician and music producer and a photographer. "Everybody goes to YouTube for everything. I learned how to do a tune up from YouTube. It's your how-to go-to platform."

The 18 videos will be shot and released as different vegetables come into season. Isom plans to add music and graphics to make the videos more entertaining.

At a recent shoot, Rudnik showed how to make a salad with snap peas and radishes and a homemade, low-fat dressing.

Customers will receive recipe cards in their baskets, but sometimes it's best to learn by watching, said Rudnik, who showed how to remove the strings from the snap peas and how to slice radishes to get the best flavor.

With her ingredients properly sliced, she blanched the peas with boiling water and then "shocked" them with ice water to slow and stop the cooking process and give them "the perfect texture."

She then mixed a dressing using olive oil, lemon juice, and rice vinegar (apple cider vinegar can be substituted) along with cumin, salt and pepper.

The cumin (the second-most popular spice in the world, behind black pepper, Rudnik relates) gives the salad a smoky flavor, Rudnik said. Those on a low-sodium diet can skip the salt.

She tossed in feta cheese (Parmesan or mozzarella can be used) and recommends chilling the salad for two to three hours to let the flavors blend.

Isom has been impressed with Rudnik's on-camera poise.

"She's a natural," he said. "I thought she'd have a script, but she does it totally off the top of her head."

Rudnik said she feels at ease in the kitchen because she loves to cook. She will be presenting cooking demonstrations for the mobile market every other week, with an intern filling in the rest of the time.

The Fruit and Vegetable Delivery Club also will offer cooking classes and lessons on canning

vegetables.

The videos should come in handy for anyone buying fresh produce, Rudnik said.

The Fruit and Vegetable Delivery Club runs from June 12 through Oct. 9. A kick-off event this week will take place in which customers can register and put down a deposit.

For information about the consumer-supported agriculture programs and other offerings at Andrews University, visit www.augardens.com. Call 363-2821 about the Fruit and Vegetable Delivery Club.

Information about where to exercise and buy fresh locally grown foods is at www.behealthyberrien.org.

Contact: jmatuszak@theHP.com, 932-0360, Twitter: @HPMatuszak