

Nutrition Nuggets

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Articles prepared by St. Anthony Park Area Seniors volunteer, Lisa Hoelscher, MPH, RDN, LD. Content in these columns are evidence-based, general information for healthy adults, and not intended as medical advice. If you have a medical condition, check with your doctor before making diet changes.



Food and Cooking Information

Save Some of the Bounty

In late summer and fall, we have more produce than we can eat. What can you do to save a bit of this bounty for winter?

Freeze

- Freezing is simple. Buy some extra in-season produce, cook it, and put it in freezer-quality plastic bags. Label the bag about what is inside, and put it in your freezer. This works well with cooked sweet corn cut off the cob.
- Fruits that freeze well include blueberries, grapes and peeled bananas. Wash the grapes and berries first, then spread them on paper towels to dry before freezing. Bananas should be peeled, cut into pieces, dipped in a lemon-water mixture to prevent browning then frozen. Put the prepared fruit on wax paper on a cookie sheet in the freezer until frozen, then storage in plastic bags.

Store

- Winter squash or spaghetti squash will last several months if stored in a cool, dry area. Do not close them up in a bag; allow air to move around them. Buy some while the price is low, and keep them for several months.

Juice

- Citrus fruits like oranges, lemons, and limes are in season during the winter. They cost less and taste better then. Buy some extra pieces, cut them in half and remove the juice with a juicer. Pour the juice into an ice cube tray. Once the juice is frozen, remove the cubes and store them in a plastic bag in the freezer. You can thaw several for a cup of fresh juice, just put one cube in your drink for a fresh flavor or use one cube when a recipe requests juice.

Make A Plan!

SOS Situations

Winter is coming. What if you were shut in by a blizzard? Do you have enough food and drink in the house to stay alone for 3 days? In a disaster there could be no power for several days so plan on foods that do not need refrigeration, water added or cooking.

Here are some non-perishable foods to keep in the house in case you cannot get out, cannot have meals delivered or have no electricity or water:

- Canned fruits and vegetables. You can drink the fruit and vegetable juices in case there is no water.
- Canned meats or baked beans. Get small cans since you may not have a refrigerator to store leftovers.
- Protein or fruit snack bars.
- Dry cereal or granola
- Dried fruit
- Nuts
- Crackers, low salt
- Canned juices

Avoid foods that will make you thirsty if there is no water available. Have a manual can opener and paper products for eating since you may not have water to wash dishes.

It is also a good idea to store extra water. One person needs a minimum of one quart (4 cups) of water a day, and one gallon per person per day is recommended. Carbonated drinks, drinks with caffeine and alcoholic beverages do not count towards this total.

Be sure you have medication in your house to last at least an extra 3-7 days beyond when you expect to receive a renewal in case there is no mail or you cannot get to the pharmacy.

“Flu” Time

In case of intestinal flu, it helps to have some easy-to-digest foods in the house so you do not need to go out when you are ill. You will also need some clear liquids with calories to keep you hydrated and give you some energy if you cannot keep food down. Here are some foods to keep in the house during “flu” season:

- clear juices
- Gatorade
- Ginger ale, Sprite or 7-Up
- Jello (ready-prepared or boxes of powder to make up)
- Beef or chicken broth (cans or bouillon cubes or granules)
- Chicken noodle soup
- Saltine crackers

Hand-Easy Kitchen Tools

As we age, it gets harder to do simple food preparation tasks. There are many gadgets available to make cooking easier. Check out the websites and lists below for items that might make someone's life easier. Any of these would be a great holiday gift.

In general, products with larger or "built up" handles are easier to hold. Many handles are made of a softer material that is easy to grip securely. Ergonomically-designed tools use the power of your hand or arm instead of just your fingers to do a task.

Websites with helpful products

You can find some of these products in department stores, Target or WalMart. Looking online gives you access to a wider range of products. Some websites with popular products are listed below or you can do your own search using the term "adaptive cooking equipment".

Oxo Good Grips Kitchen Tools

Over 25 years ago, Same Farber noticed his wife Betsey was having trouble comfortably holding her vegetable peeler due to arthritis, and the products he designed to help were the beginning of the Oxo company. You can see all their products at the websites below.

www.oxo.com/catalogsearch/result/?q=good+grips

This webpage shows 612 items which all have the "Good Grips" handles or ergonomically-designed products.

www.oxo.com/catalogsearch/result/?q=good+grips+can+opener

This webpage includes can openers and a jar opener that works wonderfully (be sure to get the one with the base pad).

www.oxo.com/products/cooking-baking/mitts-pot-holders-trivets

[These products protect the hands and hold hot dishes securely.](#)

ArthritisSupplies.com

This website carries multiple products to make life easier for people with arthritis. There are sections of adaptive kitchen can openers, knives and utensils.

www.arthritissupplies.com

A popular product on this site is the Twist-N-Write Pencil which fits into the palm of your hand, making it easier to write.

www.arthritissupplies.com/twist-n-write-pencil-4-pack.html

Walter Drake

The ring pull can opener on the link below helps open pop top cans using your arm instead of fingers. This model has a large handle that fits into the palm of your hand, making it easy to pull up the tab and lid in one arm motion.

www.wdrake.com/buy-ring-pull-can-opener-311503

Common Sense Kitchen Tools

Our monthly nutrition group agreed that these are must-have items in any kitchen:

-Microwave oven—This makes cooking fast and easy especially for frozen dinners and reheating leftovers.

-Toaster oven—A great appliance that multi-tasks. It can bake small amounts of food to avoid heating up the big oven, and also toasts bread, English muffins and waffles.

-Sharp knife—the sharper the knife, the easier it is to cut food. Dull knives lead to sore hands, cuts and avoiding fresh produce that is too hard to cut up.

-Cutting board—Always use a cutting board if you are using a knife! Plastic cutting boards are advised because they can be put in a dishwasher and cleaned more easily than wooden boards. Be sure to clean cutting boards well so they do not transfer bacteria between food items.

Fast and Easy Holiday Recipe Ideas

Appetizers

- Red and green grapes in a pretty bowl
- Hummus with crackers or carrot slices
- Greek layered dip—in an 8 x 8" dish layer the following items, in order: hummus, chopped tomatoes, chopped black olives, feta cheese. Serve with pita bread or crackers.
- Gorilla Mix—1 cup each of raisins, craisins, diced dried dates, diced dried apricots

¼ cup each of pecans, walnuts, pine nuts or slivered almonds, chocolate chips. Mix.

Side Dishes

- **Special Sweet Potatoes** (serves 4)

2 fresh sweet potatoes, baked at 400 degrees for 1 hour, cooled and peeled

8 ounce can, crushed pineapple, drained

1/8 teaspoon ginger

1/8 teaspoon nutmeg

Combine all ingredients in baking dish. Store in refrigerator. Microwave until heated through when ready to eat.

You can increase the amounts to serve more people.

- **Piquant Salad**

1 cup fresh apple, unpeeled, chopped

½ cup chopped fresh celery

½ cup chopped fresh carrots

¼ cup fat-free French or Catalina salad dressing

Combine apples, celery and carrots. Mix in salad dressing to taste. Cover and refrigerate.

- **Mock Waldorf Salad**

2 Tbsp. chopped walnuts

¼ cup raisins

4 medium apples, cored, cubed

2 stalks celery, chopped

8 oz. container low fat lemon yogurt

In large bowl, combine all ingredients; mix well. Cover and refrigerate.

Dessert Treats

- Chocolate dipped dried apricots. Melt dark chocolate, dip apricots into chocolate to cover half of apricot. Place on waxed paper to cool. Store in covered container.
- Chocolate dipped pretzel sticks. Melt dark chocolate, dip pretzel sticks into chocolate to cover top portion of stick. Place on waxed paper to cool. Store in covered container.

Food for All

Holiday gathering time is almost here. Meals for these get-togethers can be difficult when there are special diets, food allergies and individual preferences. Here are some easy ways to accommodate everyone.

Keep It Simple

The more complex a recipe, the more likely one of the ingredients will be a problem. “Plain” food can simplify everyone’s life. People can add sauces and seasonings. For example, prepare stir-fry basics separately without any sauce. Let guests dish up their own rice, vegetables, and meat; then choose their flavor from a selection of bottled sauces.

Bars Are Good

Meal “bars” are an easy way to accommodate everyone. Choose a theme—Mexican, Italian, soup and salad or sandwiches; then build your menu around that. Have all the ingredients in separate dishes and let people create their own meals. With a taco bar, you can create tacos, nachos or a taco salad. A soup bar could offer two soups (one vegetarian) with cheeses, hummus, crackers and fresh fruit.

Sweet potato “bars” are a party option in some places, and a nice alternative to sweet potato casserole. Put out plain, baked sweet potatoes with a range of toppings (butter, margarine, brown sugar, maple syrup, nuts, crushed pineapple, marshmallows, salt and pepper).

Bite Size Sweets

Desserts do not have to be complex. Setting out a variety of small candies can please everyone—dark chocolate, hard candies, mints or family favorites. You will see these “candy bars” at weddings so it is definitely a festive treat.

Enjoy a simpler approach to the holidays this year.

Simple Pot-Luck Ideas

Here are some easy ideas for “bringing a dish to share”.

Appetizers

Hummus with crackers and raw vegetables

Popcorn

Mini-skewers. Stack small pieces of cheese, meat, fruit, and vegetables on a toothpick. A Caprese skewer would be a cherry tomato, fresh mozzarella or a slice of string cheese and a basil leaf. A Greek Salad could be a piece of cucumber, grape tomato, feta cheese cube and olive. Cubes of ham and cheese with a grape would be tasty also. Put a solid item on the base so the skewer will stand upright.

Side Dishes

Red and green grapes, in a beautiful bowl

Chopped apples with sliced celery and sliced carrots, mixed with French dressing.
Refrigerate until served.

Oven-roasted veggies. Wash and cut root vegetables into chunks (use mini carrots and small new potatoes to avoid chopping). Drizzle with Italian dressing, and bake at 400 degrees about 1 hour, stirring occasionally.

Desserts

Chocolate-dipped pretzel sticks or dried apricots.

Apple dip with fresh sliced apples. Put apple slices in a bowl of water with lemon juice, then drain to prevent browning. Make dip by mixing 8 ounces cream cheese, $\frac{3}{4}$ cup brown sugar, $\frac{1}{4}$ cup white sugar, then add chopped peanuts and vanilla to desired consistency. Store in the refrigerator.

Good quality dark chocolate bars in various flavors or After Eight brand Thin Mint Squares if you would like individually packaged mints in a pretty box.

Fine cheese with fresh or dried fruits and nuts.

Getting Groceries in the Winter

Winter is here. Getting groceries when there is ice and snow everywhere is a challenge for everyone. Do not resort to canned soup and crackers for your meals; you need a variety of food to stay healthy. If you have trouble getting groceries in the winter, contact St. Anthony Park Area Seniors (SAPAS). There are many ways to obtain groceries other than driving to the store, navigating the parking lot and walking the aisles.

If you can walk around in the store, but have trouble getting to the store, SAPAS can set up volunteer drivers to help you get from home to the store, and back.

Tim & Tom's Speedy Market has an arrangement with SAPAS for participants who are physically unable to get to Tim & Tom's. On Fridays, you can call in an order between 9-10 am, and have it delivered between 10-11 am. There is a minimum order of \$15, and the groceries must be paid for by check. For further details, contact the SAPAS office at 651-642-9052.

Another local grocery delivery service is **Gopher Groceries**, which operates seven days a week. They have a minimum order of \$50 with a delivery fee of \$2. You place your order and delivery time via computer and pay with a credit card. You will need to be home when they deliver the groceries. You can find more information at www.gophergrocery.com or call 612-379-1007.

Other local stores who have grocery delivery services including **Lunds & Byerly's, Kowalkski's, and Hy-Vee**. You can also order your groceries and pick them up curbside at Lunds & Byerlys, Hy-Vee and a few local **WalMarts** (Cottage Grove, Oak Park Heights, Monticello and Maple Grove).

Coburns Delivers is a national service, which operates in the Twin Cities. You can order your food by phone or by computer; there is a \$5 fee for phone orders under \$100 along with a \$5 delivery fee for food delivered the next day. You can set up regular weekly deliveries with them. Groceries must be paid for via Coburn Delivers Direct Check, which you set up online.

Other national programs that are currently not offered in the 55108 ZIP code include Instacart, Peapod, Fresh Direct and Amazon Fresh. All of these programs have an area on their websites where you can enter your zip code to see if they provide service there.

Schwans is a Minnesota company that sells frozen foods directly to the consumer at their home. They have frozen convenience foods, fruits, vegetables and ice cream and dessert items. A salesman visits your home every few weeks to see if you need anything. You can find more information at www.schwans.com or by calling 1-888-724-9267.

The SAPAS office has a table with details about all these programs organized in a table form. Please contact the office at 651-642-9052 if you would like a copy of this form. Each program has a website with detailed information also; you can find the website by doing a Google search with the company name.

Time for Fruits and Vegetables

Spring is here. Easter is coming, and graduations are just around the corner. With the new season, think about a fresh approach to celebration meals.

Half of your plate should be covered with fruits and vegetables. Vary your vegetables. Use whole fruits rather than juices. At potlucks, ask people to bring fruits and vegetables. When you take a dish someplace, use some of the ideas below.

- Add to the usual veggie tray so it has 6-8 different kinds of vegetables.
- Reverse the pasta salad amounts so that it is a mixed vegetable salad with a little pasta in it.
- Explore different types of salsas, including fruit salsas. Fruit salsas taste great with ham, pork and fish.
- Use beans. Hummus is a wonderful alternative to dips and many flavors are available in stores.
- Look up a recipe for "Cowboy Caviar" or a mixed bean salad.
- Spinach and other greens are great mixed into salads when fresh. Cooked greens can be added to soups, lasagnas, meatloaves, meatballs and meat patties with very little flavor change.

Think of desserts as a fruit with enhancements rather than a pie or cake with fruit inside.

- a bowl of fruit with a scoop of sherbet or sorbet on top.
- meringue shell with whipped cream and fruit. This can be a great make-your-own dessert if you set out individual meringue shells with cut-up fruits, chopped nuts, lemon curd and whipped cream.
- make a fruit crisp instead of a pie. You will still have the yummy fruit filling with just a sprinkle of topping instead of the high-fat, high-calorie piecrust.
- dried apricots dipped in chocolate are a simple to fix, chewy treat.

Special breakfast meals do not have to include egg bakes. Try a yogurt or oatmeal bar with nuts, chopped fresh fruits, cinnamon, brown sugar and maple syrup for people to flavor their own dish. These are also great toppings to offer for waffles or pancakes.

It is a new season. Think about starting some new food traditions and healthy habits.

Seasoning Savvy

June 10 is National Herb & Spice Day!

Herbs and spices have been used for centuries for medicinal and flavoring purposes. As plant products, they have nutritional value, but we usually use such small amounts that the nutrition content is minimal. The flavor varieties make them a pleasure to use in cooking.

Herbs tend to come from the leaves of plants whereas spices are usually from plant parts other than the leaves such as the bark, roots, and herb seeds.

As plants, herbs and spices have a very low sodium content along with distinct flavors. This makes them a perfect substitute when you are trying to reduce your sodium intake.

There are many commercial herb and spice mixtures in stores. Look at the nutrition label to see if salt is included. If it is all herbs and spices, the sodium content will be less than 5% Daily Value and the ingredient list will not include the words "salt" or "sodium".

If you would like explore using new seasonings, *The Flavor Bible* by Karen Page and Andrew Dornenburg is a detailed guide to matching flavors in cooking.

The recipe below is a family favorite that uses both herbs and spices. It can be used as a coating on chicken, fish or pork chops. There is some sodium in the mixture from the parmesan cheese, but no added salt.

Crunchy Coating Mix

2/3 cup cornmeal

1/2 cup finely grated parmesan cheese

1/3 cup wheat germ or bran (optional)

1 tablespoon garlic powder (not garlic salt)

1 tablespoon parsley flakes

1 teaspoon pepper

2 teaspoons dry sage leaves, crushed

1 tablespoon dry thyme leaves, crushed

1 tablespoon paprika

Mix in a ziplock plastic bag. Store tightly closed in the refrigerator. It will keep for several weeks.

Pour out some of the coating mix on a plate and dip the meat, poultry or fish item in the coating mix, then place in a greased baking dish. Use a small amount of coating mix at a time to cover the items; you can always add more. Do not put coating mix that has been in contact with raw meat, poultry or fish back in the ziplock storage bag, just throw it away.

Bake according to instructions for cooking that type of meat until the item is completely done. Enjoy the aroma as it bakes!

This recipe is very flexible. You can change the seasonings or the amounts to suit your taste.

Summer Celebrations

With all the wonderful fruit in the farmer's markets and grocery stores in July, keep life simple.

Just in time for the 4th of July holiday, are the patriotic fruits....blueberries and red strawberries, raspberries, cherries and watermelon. Add white ice cream, white whipped cream or white angel food cake, and you have red, white and blue dessert.

The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) recommends washing fresh produce under clean, running water just before eating, cutting or cooking. The FDA does not recommend using soap, detergent or commercial produce washes.

Stay Hydrated

Summer also brings hot, humid weather. Make an effort to drink fluids before you get thirsty, because people often do not feel thirsty when they start to need more fluid. Water is your best choice.

Jazz up plain water with a few slices of citrus fruit, cucumbers or berries. It will look cheerful and have a slight flavor. Be sure to wash fruit and vegetables before slicing them and adding them to your beverage. Flavored carbonated waters are tasty too; check the nutrition label and look for brands that offer zero calories per serving

“Minnesota Grown” in Your Farmer’s Market

By August, local farmers’ markets are full of produce. It is time for tomatoes, sweet corn, sweet peppers, summer squash, radishes, kohlrabi, green onions, green beans, cucumbers, and carrots. At the end of August, the early apples start to ripen too.

There are several farmers’ markets near the St. Anthony Park area:

Roseville Farmer’s Market, Tuesday 8 am-noon

Corpus Christi Church at the corner of Fairview and County Road B

Como Park Dockside Farmer’s Market, Thursday 2-6 pm

1360 North Lexington Avenue

The Minnesota Grown program is a statewide partnership between the Minnesota Department of Agriculture and Minnesota producers of specialty crops and livestock. The program was created over 30 years ago, and now has over 1,300 members producing everything from garden crops to wine, meat and dairy products, maple syrup, wild rice and Christmas trees. They produce an annual Minnesota Grown Directory and also have information online at:

<http://minnesotagrown.com>

If you would like general information about specific crops or products, go to this webpage and click on the produce name of interest.

<http://minnesotagrown.com/minnesota-grown-products/>

Many August crops can be cleaned, chopped and mixed to make a main dish salad—a big plate of lettuces, greens, vegetables and a chicken breast for protein.

For a fresh take on carrots, try this carrot fries recipe. You will get a fun finger food with the great taste of slow-roasted root vegetables. You can prepare any root vegetable this way, cut into chunks, wedges or strips.

Carrot Fries

Makes 4 servings

Ingredients

1 pound carrots, cut into consistent size pieces

1-2 tablespoons olive oil

Salt and pepper (optional)

Seasonings of choice.

Experiment by sprinkling a pinch of one or two of the following herbs and spices over the carrots: tarragon, thyme, dill, ginger, coriander, cinnamon, or cumin.

Directions

1. Preheat the oven to 400 degrees.
2. Peel the carrots and cut them into strips about 1/4" thick and a few inches long
3. Line a baking sheet with foil, and spread the carrots on the sheet.
4. Drizzle the olive oil over the carrots.
5. Add any seasoning you have chosen to use.
6. Mix the carrots to coat them all with the oil.
7. Bake 15 minutes, then turn pieces over. Add more oil if needed, and bake another 15 minutes until tender and lightly browned.

Super Squash

Markets and stores are full of fall vegetables. One of my favorites is acorn squash. Not only is it nutritious, it is easy to create into a meal-in-one.

Acorn squash provides nearly 60% of your daily Vitamin A requirement as well as significant amounts of Vitamin C and B6, fiber, copper and manganese. It is low in fat and in sodium.

You can flavor acorn squash to be sweet or savory. Brown sugar, maple syrup or honey with cinnamon tastes like dessert. Adding salt, pepper, butter or margarine with chopped onions and peppers provides a tasty side dish.

One way to make the squash a complete meal is to add cooked, chopped sausage links or ham with chopped apples and some nuts to the center portion of cooked squash half, after removing the seeds. Mix it up and eat it from the rind.

I used to cut up raw squash, then bake it; but have converted to the microwave method. It is much easier to cut a cooked squash than a raw one if you have arthritis.

Microwave directions:

Wash the squash and then pierce the rind in 3-4 spots with a fork to prevent exploding.

Place the whole squash on a paper plate, and microwave for 4 minutes.

Turn the squash over, and cook for another 4 minutes.

Carefully cut the squash in half, watching out for steam. Remove the seeds in the center.

If the squash is still firm, heat for 1-2 minutes more in the microwave until done.

Add your filling or seasonings of choice and enjoy!

It's Apple Time!

Everyone loves apples. It's no surprise that Honeycrisp apples are Minnesota's state fruit. There are hundreds of apple varieties, and you can find fresh, local apples everywhere right now.

Try some different varieties—some are sweeter, some are more tart, some are more firm, some turn brown faster than others, some have tougher skins. It's fun to line up several varieties, slice them up, and see which one you like best.

Apples have great nutrition. They are fairly low calorie, contain no fat or sodium, and provide both soluble and insoluble fiber. If you eat the skin, you will get even more insoluble fiber. They contain many vitamins and minerals, although none in high amounts.

If you have dental problems, eating fresh apples can be a challenge. Often, just slicing an apple eliminates biting problems. If chewing is a problem, you may want to remove the peel from the slices. The softest version is applesauce; most varieties will cook down easily.

Each apple variety produces its own distinctive flavor and texture of applesauce. Cook the apple pieces with a little water in a covered pan for 15-20 minutes; you can add sugar after cooking if it is needed. Some people like to add ground cinnamon or mace for a different flavor. Using a potato masher kitchen tool to smash the cooked apple pieces in the pan is an easy way to make sauce.

Reduce fat and calories and save time by changing your apple dessert habits. Why fuss with making pies, cakes, and quick breads? Try this recipe when you want a fast, fresh apple dessert. It tastes like caramel apples without the stickiness!

Apple Dip

8 ounces cream cheese, regular or low-fat or Neufchatel
3/4 cup brown sugar
3/4 cup white sugar
Vanilla
Finely chopped skinless peanuts
Sliced apples

Combine sugars, then mix sugars and cream cheese together. Using a food processor or mixer makes this easier.

Add vanilla and mix until the dip is as soft as you would like. The dip will thicken in the refrigerator and get softer at room temperature.
Add chopped peanuts until you like the dip texture.
Store in refrigerator until ready to serve.

Slice apples right before serving. To reduce browning, mix a few tablespoons of lemon juice or the juice of half a lemon into a mixing bowl of water and submerge the apple slices in the water. Remove the apple slices and drain, but do not rinse.

Serve sliced apples with dip and enjoy!

Frozen Fruit Delight

Fresh berries in winter are a treat; however, you can get that fresh flavor as easily with less cost from frozen berries. Some folks love to eat them frozen; blueberries are particularly nice. They taste like blueberry sorbet.

Most frozen fruit is frozen at peak ripeness shortly after harvest. The flavor and nutrition is “locked in” with the rapid freezing. In contrast, many “fresh” fruits can be shipped hundreds of miles, and may have been harvested before they were ripe.

Nutritional value varies depending on the nutrient and the processing. Fiber and minerals tend to not be affected much by freezing. Vitamins are more sensitive to cooking and oxidation; fat-soluble vitamins are more stable than water-soluble ones. To avoid analyzing of each individual nutrient, it is generally accepted that the nutritional value of frozen fruits is comparable to fresh. Changes in nutritional value also occur when you cook foods so the purchased form is just one step in the process.

Advantages to frozen fruit include:

- no need for preservatives or added ingredients so most frozen fruits have only one ingredient—the fruit. Be sure to buy plain fruit, not fruit with added sugar.
- frozen fruits store safely for a long time. The USDA recommends using frozen fruit up within 12 months of purchase for the best quality.
- they are usually packed in plastic bags so you can take out only what you need. The flexible bags pack well into small freezer spaces.
- large fruits are cut into smaller pieces or slices, saving you preparation time and effort.
- most grocers carry a wide variety of frozen fruits.

What can you do with frozen fruits other than eat them frozen?

- use frozen fruit to make smoothies for flavor and thickness.
- bake frozen fruit in fruit crisps and crumbles, saving you the work of slicing larger fruits. The thawed fruit will release extra liquid so be sure your recipe includes cornstarch or another thickener to create a sauce.
- make sauces with frozen fruit as easily as from fresh fruits since they all become soft when cooked.
- add frozen fruit to cooked oatmeal. The hot cereal will thaw the fruit so it is not hard to chew, and you will finish eating it before it turns too mushy.

For Valentine’s Day, here is a simple recipe for a sweet-sour berry sauce which you can serve over ice cream, a brownie or meringue with whipped

cream to make a special holiday dessert. The recipe was originally from a Diabetic Living Magazine recipe published by Eating Well online at www.eatingwell.com/recipe/266840/blackberry-balsamic-vinegar-ice-cream-sauce

I modified the recipe to use fresh or frozen fruit. You can add your own touch by substituting another liquid for the balsamic vinegar. Liqueurs would add a festive touch or juice or water would work if you dislike the tang of balsamic vinegar. The original recipe was fresh blackberries with balsamic vinegar.

Berry-Balsamic Sauce

Ingredients

1 tablespoon brown sugar or brown sugar substitute
1/2 teaspoon cornstarch
1 tablespoon butter
2 cups frozen berries
1 tablespoon balsamic vinegar or liquid of choice

Directions

In a small bowl, combine the sugar and cornstarch.

In a medium skillet or saucepan, melt the butter. Add the brown sugar mixture and vinegar or alternative. Simmer for 2-3 minutes until the mixture thickens. Add the fruits, cook and stir for 1-2 minutes with fresh fruit or 4-5 minutes with frozen fruit.

Remove from heat and cool about 20 minutes. Serve over ice cream, sorbet, brownies, cake or meringue.

Yield: about 4-1/4 cup servings

Nutrition Information for: 1/2 cup ice cream and 1/4 cup sauce made with fresh blackberries and balsamic vinegar.

149 calories; 5 g fat (3 g sat); 3 g fiber; 24 g carbohydrates; 3 g protein; 12 mcg folate; 15 mg cholesterol; 18 g sugars; 662 IU vitamin A; 10 mg vitamin C; 96 mg calcium; 0 mg iron; 70 mg sodium

References

Rickman, JC et al. Nutritional comparison of fresh, frozen and canned fruits and vegetables. Part 1. Vitamins C and B and phenolic compounds. 2007, J Sci Food Agric 87:930–944 (2007).

<https://www.fruitsandveggiesmorematters.org/frozen-and-canned-fruits-and-vegetables-vs-fresh>

What Will They Think Of Next?

Have you looked at the frozen vegetable aisle lately? Amazing new products are appearing every month. Protein blends. Superfood blends. Veggie spirals. Grilled vegetables. Riced cauliflower with multiple flavor options. I even saw a riced cauliflower with stir-fry vegetables the other day—just heat and add your favorite sauce.

Even plain, everyday frozen vegetables are a great product, and less expensive than the new creations.

- nutrition content is similar to fresh vegetables, providing easy access to vegetable variety in the middle of the winter.
- cutting and chopping is already done, saving you time and energy.
- frozen vegetables are sold in plastic bags. Take what you need and put the rest back in the freezer.
- when you buy plain vegetables, you can control how much fat and salt you consume by adding your own seasonings.
- some products can be steamed in the bag, eliminating washing a pan.

Many people wonder about the safety of steamable bags. They are made from microwave-safe plastics and tested to ensure harmful substances are not migrating into the food. Good Housekeeping had an independent lab verify these claims; unfortunately the original article is no longer online to reference. Steamable bags should not be heated more than once. These vegetables tend to be more expensive than those in standard packaging. Some people prefer to be cautious about using plastics for health and environmental reasons. If you like a “steamable” product but do not want to microwave in the bag, you can cook those vegetables into another microwave-safe container. Never microwave food while it is in regular plastic bags or plastic storage containers. Only bags and containers marked as microwave-safe should be used in the microwave.

Trends in the frozen vegetable aisle include:

Riced cauliflower. Many companies make riced cauliflower now since demand is strong. It is a low-carbohydrate substitute for rice as well as other starchy grains. It cooks in 5 minutes, provides cruciferous vegetable servings and tastes good. You can use plain cauliflower rice as a starchy base for an entree or use one of the many flavored combinations to create a side dish. There is no limit to what you can do with this versatile vegetable.

Mashed cauliflower has also joined the freezer case. Check the nutrition label for fat and salt content since these are flavored to taste like mashed potatoes.

Spiralized vegetables. Another way to substitute a lower carbohydrate vegetable for starchy foods is to use spiralized vegetables. Winter squash, zucchini, sweet potato and beets are some choices. Add your sauce and protein, and you have a lower carbohydrate pasta meal substitute.

Grilled vegetables. Items like eggplant slices, zucchini slices and vegetable ratatouille are available for year-round summer flavor.

Protein blends. These provide mixtures of whole grains, legumes, vegetables and sometimes edamame with a wide variety of ethnic flavor sauces. One bag contains a single 10 ounce serving with 10 grams of plant-based protein. This is not as much protein as an entree which is usually at least 21 grams protein so plan to add some extra protein if you want to make this your main dish.

Superfood Blends. These include super-nutritious ingredients like barley, black or brown rice, legumes, vegetables and fruits in a sauce. These are designed to be nutritious side dishes. Watch the nutrition label for excess fat and sodium from the sauces.

Using these new products as inspiration, you can mix and match your favorite vegetables with your own rice, legumes, starches and seasonings to create your favorite flavors in casseroles, soups or side dishes. You can even freeze your creations just like the commercial companies.

Here is a quick soup recipe from the American Institute of Cancer Research using frozen vegetables. Note that the vegetables are added in a specific order for optimum cooking time.

Quick Eight-Vegetable Soup

Ingredients:

- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- 1 small chopped onion (or can use frozen chopped onions)
- 4 cups vegetable or chicken broth, low-sodium preferred
- 1/2 cup frozen baby lima beans
- 1-15 ounce can no-salt-added black, Great Northern or navy beans
- 1 cup frozen mixed vegetables
- 1/2 cup frozen, tri-colored bell peppers
- 2 teaspoons oregano or thyme
- Pinch of dried red pepper flakes, if desired
- 1 cup frozen broccoli florets
- Salt to taste

1/4 cup grated Parmesan cheese

Directions:

In a large saucepan, heat oil. Add onion and cook for about 5 minutes, stirring occasionally, until translucent.

Add broth, and bring mixture to a boil.

Add lima beans, reduce heat and simmer, covered, for about 5 minutes.

Add canned beans, mixed vegetables, peppers, oregano and pepper flakes and simmer, covered, another 5 minutes.

Add broccoli, cover and cook for 5 minutes.

Add salt to taste. Serve with 1 tablespoon Parmesan cheese sprinkled over the top.

This soup can be refrigerated for 3 days; then any leftovers should be frozen or thrown out.

Yield: 4 servings (1 2/3 cup serving size)

Nutrition Information: 220 calories, 5 g total fat, 30 g carbohydrate, 9 g dietary fiber, 11 g protein, 350 mg sodium

References

<https://www.consumerreports.org/frozen-vegetables/todays-frozen-vegetables-go-way-beyond-peas-and-carrots/>

<https://www.drweil.com/health-wellness/balanced-living/healthy-living/plastic-steaming-bag-danger/>

<http://www.aicr.org/health-e-recipes/2019/quick-eight-vegetable-soup.html>

'Tis the Season for a New Recipe!

Earlier this year, I discovered a recipe which has become my “go to” recipe. It’s “zesty” without being spicy, easy to prepare, vegetarian and gluten-free as well as relatively low carbohydrate and moderately high fiber. In addition, it can be used in different ways. Perfect for the holiday season!

The original recipe is an appetizer recipe from the Hatch Chile Company, and based on canned, mild, chopped green chiles. Here is the link to the original recipe:

<https://www.hatchchileco.com/recipe/zesty-green-chile-and-black-bean-appetizer-bites/>

I added my modification of the recipe at the end of this article.

When I had leftover pepper mixture, I found several tasty uses other than on tortilla chips. Here are some other ways to use this mixture:

- use as a salsa over a chicken breast, pork chop or fish fillet.
- mix in with green beans for more flavor.
- spread over a Neufchatel cream cheese block for a quick appetizer with crackers.
- add to tossed salad ingredients.
- mix into cream cheese to make a tangy sandwich spread.

The appetizer bites are nice with a bowl of soup or main dish salad to jazz up a meal; they work well at times other than a party.

Enjoy the flavors and bright colors in this recipe to warm up your holiday season!

Multi-use Salsa Appetizers

Modified from Hatch Chili Company “Zesty Green Chile and Black Bean Appetizers”©

Ingredients

- 2 (4-ounce) cans of mild, diced green chiles
- 1 15-ounce can black beans, rinsed
- 1 cup red sweet peppers, chopped
- 1 cup yellow sweet peppers, chopped
- 2 scallions, sliced (optional)
- Zest of one lime
- Juice of one lime
- 1-2 tablespoons dried cilantro
- Tortilla chips (Tostitos Scoops work well)
- 2 cups shredded cheese of choice

Directions

Using a medium-size mixing bowl, combine 2 cans green chiles including juice, rinsed black beans, red and yellow chopped peppers, scallions, lime zest, lime juice, and cilantro.

Place tortilla chips on a cookie sheet, and add a heaping teaspoon of mixture onto each tortilla chip. Using two forks to lift the salsa from the liquid in the bowl and place on the chips works well.

Sprinkle with shredded cheese.

Broil in preheated oven about 3 minutes or until cheese melts. Serve immediately.

Yield: about 4-5 dozen using Tostito Scoops tortilla chips.

Mugs, Hugs and Warm Treats

Do you have all your holiday gifts wrapped and ready? I sure don't. So if you are in the same situation, here are some food gift ideas.

Purchase or recycle a mug, water bottle, travel cup, insulated cup, glass or cup appropriate for the person receiving the gift. Fill the mug with treats that person would enjoy, and wrap it up. It may be easier to wrap loosely in tissue paper and deliver in a gift bag. Be sure to include cooking directions if you give a homemade recipe mix.

Most grocery stores now provide shopping service so call your local store with a list of the ingredients you need, then either pick up the order curbside or have it delivered.

Ideas for filling the mugs:

Tea, coffee, cocoa, or powdered hot cider packets.

Spiced Winter Tea Mix

2 cups Tang drink powder

1/2 cup powdered lemonade

1/2 cup instant tea

1 1/2 cups sugar

1/2 teaspoon ground cinnamon

1/2 teaspoon ground cloves

Mix together and store tightly sealed. For gifts, portion into small zipper-sealed sandwich bags.

To make the drink: combine 2 teaspoons mix with 1 cup hot water.

Barley Soup Mix

This recipe makes about 1 quart of soup. It's a great winter supper to keep on hand for yourself too.

1/4 cup pearl barley

1/4 cup red or yellow lentils

1/4 cup green split peas

Place these items in a zipper-sealed sandwich bag.

3-4 teaspoons instant chicken bouillon

2 teaspoons cornstarch

2 teaspoons instant onion flakes

1/2 teaspoon garlic powder

1/4 teaspoon crushed, dried thyme

2 teaspoons dried parsley

1/2 teaspoon crushed dried basil

1 small bay leaf

1/4 teaspoon black pepper

Place these ingredients in a zipper-sealed sandwich bag, and place it in the bag with the barley and legumes.

To cook the soup: rinse the barley and legumes. Place them in a large pan with the contents of the seasoning packet and 5 cups of water. Bring to a boil, reduce the heat, cover and simmer for 45-60 minutes until the legumes and barley are tender. Stir occasionally. Enjoy!

Warm Drinks for Cold Weather

Warm foods and beverages have a stronger flavor than chilled foods and drinks, and the smell of a warm beverage enhances flavor. A warm drink can be just the thing to perk up a dark January day!

Coffee, tea and cocoa powder all come from plants, and contain many beneficial phytochemicals. In their plain forms, they are healthy, but we often add other ingredients to them which can cause health issues. Watch out for added fat, sugar or caffeine in drinks. If any of these ingredients are health issues for you, look for ways to minimize them. There are many ways to modify beverages by reducing or replacing problem ingredients so you'll have lots of choices.

Fat sources include whole milk and cream, coffee creamers, coconut and other milk alternatives which are not modified to be lower-fat. Fat adds nine calories per gram so if you are watching calories, it is wise to use lower-fat choices.

Fat alternatives: skim milk or fat-free milk alternatives are the healthiest choice for something milky. These are usually not satisfying flavors so I usually suggest people explore different beverages.

Sugar sources include sugar, flavored syrups and fruit juices. Lemon and lime juice are exceptions with little sugar and minimal calories. There are many artificial sweeteners which provide less calories. Spices like cinnamon and extracts like vanilla, almond and mint can provide the sense of a sweet flavor so you add less sugar. You can also explore beverages with a less bitter flavor. Recipes to illustrate this are listed below.

Caffeine bothers some people. The popular K-cup pods deliver similar caffeine to regularly brewed coffee and tea. Below is a list of caffeine in an 8 ounce serving from a Mayo Clinic source:

Coffee, brewed, 8 oz.	95-165 mg
Coffee, instant, 8 oz.	63 mg
Coffee, decaf, brewed, 8 oz.	2-5 mg
Coffee, decaf, instant, 8 oz	8 mg
Latte or mocha, 8 oz.	63-126 mg
Tea, brewed, black, 8 oz	25-48 mg
Tea, brewed, black, decaf, 8 oz.	2-5 mg
Tea, brewed green, 8 oz	25-29 mg
Tea, ready to drink, bottled, 8 oz	5-40 mg

One method of reducing caffeine is to drink half regular-half-decaf while you become accustomed to less caffeine. Adding more water will dilute caffeine also; dilute teas taste better than dilute coffee.

New Beverage Ideas

-try coffee or tea "plain". Lighter roasts or flavored coffee beans are less bitter. Flavored tea bags provide a wide range of flavors, many of them sweet, without any added sugar or calories. Brewing tea correctly will reduce bitterness from too much time or too hot of water.

-try hot water with fruit slices. My husband's grandfather used to start his day with a cup of hot water with lemon. Vary the flavor with slices of any citrus fruit (lemon, lime or orange).

-try new beverage combinations such as the recipes below from a Shape.com column. More recipes are listed in the link in the References at the end of this article:

Skinny Peppermint Mocha

1/2 cup coffee, regular or decaffeinated
2 drops peppermint extract
1/3 cup nonfat milk
2 tablespoons dark chocolate syrup
Combine ingredients in warm coffee.

Hot Cinnamon Coffee

1 cup coffee, regular or decaffeinated
1-2 tablespoons ground cinnamon
2 tablespoons nonfat milk
1 teaspoon brown sugar or artificial brown sugar sweetener
Combine ingredients in warm coffee.

Hot Lemon Tea

1 green tea bag
1 cup hot water
3 tablespoons lemon juice
1 teaspoon vanilla extract
2 tablespoons agave syrup or other sweetener of choice
Cinnamon stick, if desired
Steep tea bag in boiling hot water for 3-4 minutes, and discard. Mix in lemon juice, vanilla and sweetener. Insert cinnamon stick and stir to add cinnamon flavor.

-experiment with teas.

Teas are infusions of plant materials in water; they are generally made from: -"tea" (leaves of the *Camellia sinensis* plant ranging from white to green to black depending on the curing time),
-"herbal teas" from a wide variety of plant leaves

-“rooibos”, a plant from South Africa which produces a tangy, red beverage.

There are dozens of “medicinal” teas advertising health effects made from plants other than the *Camellia sinensis* ; some of these are potent so do not use them regularly without checking with your doctor. They are not regulated and labelled like medications, but can have a medicine-like effect.

Many tea bags smell sweet because of added dried fruit or sweet spices, but do not contain “sugar”. If you look at the nutrition label, you will see they have no calories. Pre-made tea drinks may have added sugars; always check the nutrition label.

Tea bags can be brewed in warm water, milk or juice. Chai tea bags are a popular flavor to brew in milk or a milk alternative. They can also be combined to make new flavors or dilute a caffeinated item with a non-caffeinated item. Gather some friends and have a tea-tasting party where everyone brings different flavored tea bags to share and compare flavors.

One of my best tea “drinks” came from a gentleman standing in the grocery aisle with me, looking at the teas.

No Name Fruit Tea

1 teabag of Celestial Black Cherry Berry tea

1 teabag any orange-spice flavored tea

2 cups of hot water.

Brew both bags in the water for 2-3 minutes. Discard the tea bags and enjoy warm or iced.

An added benefit is that the black cherry tea is an herbal tea so the caffeine content is diluted.

Enjoy exploring new beverage options this month!

Resources:

<https://www.mayoclinic.org/healthy-lifestyle/nutrition-and-healthy-eating/in-depth/caffeine/art-20049372>

<https://www.shape.com/healthy-eating/healthy-drinks/10-warm-drinks-wont-pack-pounds>

Try Something New in the New Year

Have you thought about having meals or groceries delivered? Now is a great time to try out something new since the snow, ice and cold make getting around difficult. Common reasons people give to avoid these services include:

- too expensive
- no computer
- calling the service is hard
- I can't pick the food out myself
- I won't get the brand I like

Don't fall into the negativity trap! The St. Anthony Park Area Seniors office would be glad to help you find a helper for the computer or phone process. They can also provide drivers if you would like to order curbside pickup at your favorite grocery store.

If you prefer telephone ordering, try one of these programs for groceries:

- Help At Your Door (formerly Store to Door) 651-642-1892 They accept EBT and SNAP benefits as well as check, credit or debit card.
- Tim & Tom's Speedy Market Contact the SAPAS office for details about this service. 651-642-9052. Orders are called in and delivered on Fridays. Payment is by check only.

Services that require a computer include:

- Coburn's Delivers

<https://www.cobornsdelivers.com/loginMessage.action>

- Gopher Grocery

<https://www.gophergrocery.com>

If you have difficulty cooking or are recovering from an illness, you can have meals delivered direct to your home.

- Meals on Wheels.

<https://meals-on-wheels.com> or (612) 623-3363

-Mom's Meals

Provides fresh meals which can be stored in the refrigerator for up to 14 days, and cooked in the microwave. They offer special menus including heart-friendly, diabetic-friendly, renal-friendly, gluten-free, vegetarian, cancer support and puree.

There is a minimum order of 7 meals at \$6.99/meal and a flat delivery fee of \$14.95. The total minimum order for 7 meals would be \$63.88.

<http://www.momsmeals.com>

September is Food Safety Month

Although most of us think of food safety at picnics in the summer heat, we need to think about it all year. Bacteria are always around us; they make us sick when they grow and multiply to numbers that our bodies cannot destroy. Bacteria can double in 20 minutes, given the right conditions.

Senior citizens are at higher risk for food-borne illness for several reasons:

- underlying health conditions may make them more likely to get ill.
- the stomach and intestines work more slowly so bacteria have more time to grow and increase in numbers.
- the liver and kidneys do not work as well so cannot remove bacteria and toxins as effectively.
- the stomach may not produce enough acid to kill the pathogens you might eat, leading to higher numbers of bacteria in your gut.

What you can do to avoid getting sick from food.

1. **Clean: wash hands and surfaces often.**

Bacteria are everywhere in the kitchen so be sure everything involved in food preparation is cleaned well with warm, soapy water.

- use plastic cutting boards instead of wooden ones.
- cloth towels, washcloths and sponges should be washed often. Otherwise, use paper towels.

-scrub raw fruits and vegetables with a brush and rinse well with water to clean them.

2. **Separate: do not cross-contaminate.**

Keep raw meat, poultry and seafood separate from other foods in your grocery cart, bags and in your refrigerator.

- use separate cutting boards for raw meat products and raw produce. Be sure to wash the cutting boards with warm, soapy water or put them in the dishwasher after use.

-never put cooked food back on a plate that held it when it was raw.

3. **Cook: cook food to the proper temperature**

Eggs—both the white and the yolk should be cooked until firm.

Fish—cook until opaque and it flakes with a fork all the way through.

Meats, poultry, casseroles—need to be cooked through. You cannot tell if it is fully cooked by looking at it. (Poultry 165F, ground beef 160F, roasts/steaks at least 145F, leftovers 165F. Microwave ovens do not cook evenly. To minimize uncooked spots, rotate the food, stir it often and cover it during cooking.

4. **Chill: refrigerate promptly**

Cold temperatures keep bacteria from growing and multiplying. Cold does not kill bacteria, just slows it down so thawed foods need to be cooked or reheated to the proper temperature.

--Bacteria grow best at room temperature between 40-140 degrees F.

–Be sure your refrigerator is colder than 40F and your freezer is colder than 0F.

–Large amounts of food should be divided into smaller containers to cool quickly

--Marinate and thaw foods in the refrigerator, not on the counter.

All food should be eaten, refrigerated or frozen within 2 hours of cooking.

Keep hot foods hot and cold foods cold!

For more information, see the following websites:

www.foodsafety.gov

<https://www.foodsafety.gov/risk/olderadults/index.html>

<https://choosemyplate-prod.azureedge.net/sites/default/files/misc/KitchenCompanion.pdf>

<https://www.choosemyplate.gov/ten-tips-be-food-safe>

<https://www.choosemyplate.gov/food-safety>

If you receive home-delivered meals, pay attention!

Know when your meal is delivered. You need to eat the food within at least two hours of delivery, preferably sooner, or store it appropriately for eating at another time. Remember that the food has been traveling for a time so some of the two hour time frame is already used up.

If you do not plan to eat the meal immediately, freeze or refrigerate the food. Separate the food items in the container so that they cool down faster.

You can reheat the food items when you are ready to eat them.

Be Food Safe

Do you get Meals on Wheels? Does your family ever bring over some food for you to eat later? Have neighbors dropped off chicken soup when you were ill? These are all moments to be extra alert about food safety.

Food should only be at room temperature for two hours. When someone brings you prepared food, the time the food has spent traveling to you counts as part of that two hours. Be prompt about either eating that food right away or putting it in the refrigerator or freezer. Foods need to stay cold (below 40 degrees Fahrenheit) or hot (above 140 degrees Fahrenheit).

About 1 in 6 Americans gets sick from food-borne illness every year. You do not need food poisoning. Keep hot foods hot and cold foods cold.

When you are ready to eat that stored meal, cook it properly. Cold does not kill bacteria in food, it just slows down how quickly they increase. We get sick when there are more bacteria than our bodies can fight.

Heat kills bacteria. Reheat those stored meals or leftovers properly. Use a food temperature thermometer. Minimum temperatures for cooked foods are:

145 degrees F Whole beef, veal, lamb, pork, ham and fin fish
160 degrees F Ground meats (beef, veal, pork, lamb) and egg dishes
165 degrees F All poultry, stuffing, leftovers and casseroles

If you reheat food in a microwave, be aware that they heat foods unevenly. Follow some simple rules when reheating food:

- stir the food partway through the cooking time
- follow directions to let the food stand after cooking. This allows the heat from the hot spots to spread through the food.
- check the food temperature with a thermometer in several spots to be sure it is completely cooked.

Solid foods like hot dogs are best cooked by boiling, baking or grilling where heat is more even.

For more information:

www.foodsafety.gov

www.fightbac.org

www.cdc.gov/features/befoodsafe/index.html

Take Action for Safe Food

About 1 out of 6 Americans get sick from food poisoning every year. That's around 48 million people. Why?

According to the Centers for Disease Control, there are new challenges to food safety because of:

- changes in food production and supply
- changes in the environment
- better detection of illness and outbreaks
- new bacteria, new toxins and more antibiotic resistance
- changes in consumer habits

Foods which are more likely to carry food poisoning include raw (unpasteurized) milk and products made from it, raw or undercooked eggs/meat/poultry/fish, and sprouts. Any food can become contaminated in the field, during processing or through cross-contamination in the kitchen. In many cases, germs causing food poisoning are killed by adequate cooking so you can reduce your risk of food poisoning by cooking foods properly, and washing uncooked foods well.

Common symptoms of food poisoning include an upset stomach, stomach cramps, nausea, vomiting, diarrhea and fever. These may be mild or severe, and you may develop symptoms within hours or it may be a few days. If you think you got sick from food poisoning, contact your doctor or local health department to report your illness. This may help them identify if there is an outbreak and keep other people from getting sick.

Food poisoning may be more than a tummy ache. Some people get so ill they need to be hospitalized, and some infections may lead to long-term health problems like kidney failure, autoimmune, digestive and neurological diseases.

Follow the common-sense food safety guidelines below to prevent food poisoning.

Use safe water and foods. Visit foodborneillness.org to sign up for email alerts about food recalls.

Clean. Wash your hands. Clean all work surfaces before and after food preparation.

Do **not** wash meat and poultry. Wash fruits and vegetables before eating, cutting or cooking unless the package says it has been prewashed. Wash produce by scrubbing under running water so the knife does not draw dirt and germs on the surface inside.

Separate. Keep raw meat, poultry, seafood and eggs away from ready-to-eat foods. Use separate cutting boards.

Cook. Cooking will kill germs. Cook food properly and use a food thermometer to tell when the food is done.

Chill. Put food away quickly, and make sure your refrigerator is 40 degrees Fahrenheit or less. Put foods away into the refrigerator or freezer within 2 hours of cooking.

Report suspected foodborne illness to your doctor or health department.

For more details, check the references below. With good sanitation, proper cooking and quick cooling, you can reduce the risk of food poisoning.

References:

<https://www.cdc.gov/foodsafety/>

<https://www.cdc.gov/foodsafety/challenges/index.html>

<https://www.cdc.gov/foodsafety/symptoms.html>

<https://www.cdc.gov/foodsafety/foods-linked-illness.html>

<http://www.foodborneillness.org/high-risk-foods.html>

<http://www.foodborneillness.org/long-term-health-outcomes.html>

Go Further With Food

National Nutrition Month 2018

Make your foods to go further for you. Planning ahead can help you save time, cook less, and reduce food waste.

Save time:

-look at your week. Plan a main meal for every day that you are not eating out, based on the amount of time you have to cook. Write down the plan, then make a grocery list. I have done this for years; it takes about 15 minutes. It is more efficient than standing in front of the refrigerator trying to think of something for dinner.

-if your list is complete and you follow it, you will not need to make emergency grocery store runs.

-keep a few commercial frozen dinners on hand for unexpected situations or for days when there is not time to cook. There are more and more healthy choices in the store. Eating in is always faster than going out for “fast food”.

Cook less:

-when you cook a meal, make extra. Always. Either eat the leftovers for lunch in the next few days or freeze them for a day when you don't have the time or energy to fix a meal.

-bring home half your meal when you eat out. Then you have lunch or dinner ready for the next day.

-Leftovers should be eaten within three days or frozen.

Reduce food waste:

-planning your meals ahead means that you have what you need on hand to make your meals, and that you have a plan for the leftovers too. No more food hanging around in the back of the refrigerator going bad.

-if you do end up with too much food, share it! Invite someone over for a meal or take a “frozen dinner” to a friend who is ill.

-excess vegetables can go into soups, stews and salads

-excess fruits can be frozen, cooked into a sauce or made into a fruit crisp.

-excess meat, poultry or fish can be frozen.

Good foods to freeze for “planned leftovers”:

-soups and stews that are not creamy.

-lasagna

-roasted whole chicken. Cook in a crockpot or bake covered with foil to keep tender. Freeze leftover meat for future casseroles, tacos, salads or adding to canned soups or frozen dinners for a bit more protein.

-grilled burgers. These freeze well and are a great treat in the middle of the winter.

-cooked rice. This freezes well, and is easy to thaw when you would like a stir-fry.

-ground beef or ground turkey. Plain meat or seasoned as taco meat or sloppy joes all freeze well.

Some people like to freeze food in plastic bags since they take up less space than firm containers. Other people prefer the containers because the bags can slide around. Experiment with what works for your storage space.

Ancient Grain Meets Modern Needs

Bored with rice? Have you tried quinoa (pronounced “keen-wah”)? Native to South America, it has been cultivated for around 5,000 years providing outstanding nutrition.

Quinoa is an edible seed containing all nine essential amino acids, making it a complete protein source like meats, fish and poultry. It contains no gluten or cholesterol, and is a good source of fiber. Grown by the Incas in the Andes Mountains of South America, quinoa has provided outstanding nutrition for centuries.

The seeds are coated with saponins, which taste bitter, and deter birds and insects from eating them. This coating is usually removed during processing after harvest, but occasionally cooking directions will request rinsing the seeds under running water before cooking to remove it.

Most grocery stores stock quinoa in the health-food area. It comes in various colors—white, red, black. You can also buy quinoa flour, good for gluten-free baking, and quinoa flakes, which make a nice high-protein hot cereal.

Quinoa cooks in about 15 minutes and has a mild flavor, making it useful to keep on hand. Use it as a side dish, base of a entree, mix with other grains to make a pilaf or add to a soup.

Basic Cooking Directions

Ingredients

1 cup quinoa, rinsed if directions request

2 cups liquid, water or broth

Instructions

Bring the cooking liquid to a boil.

Stir in the quinoa, then turn the heat to low.

Cover pan and simmer until all the liquid is absorbed, about 10-15 minutes.

When quinoa is cooked, the seed will be soft and a white ring will pop out of the kernel.

Stir with a fork to fluff the cooked quinoa.

Yield: 1 cup dry quinoa makes 3 cups cooked quinoa.

For a Mediterranean Quinoa Full-Meal Salad, add chopped bell peppers, chopped onion, sliced olives, some chickpeas and cherry tomatoes to cooked quinoa. Mix in a vinaigrette dressing of your choice, then top with feta cheese. Vary the vegetables according to your taste and your leftovers.

Nutrition Information

Heart Health Update

In 2013, the American Heart Association and the American College for Cardiology changed their guidelines for deciding who needs treatment to lower the risk of heart disease. The new formula includes looking at your gender, race, age, total cholesterol, HDL cholesterol, blood pressure, whether you smoke and whether you have diagnosed hypertension or diabetes. It is a longer list of risk factors than used in the past.

Cholesterol

Cholesterol is a very confusing word. We have cholesterol in our blood, and we have cholesterol in foods. When you have blood test, there are several kinds of cholesterol tests like total cholesterol, HDL cholesterol and LDL cholesterol.

Cholesterol in Your Blood

Your body needs cholesterol. It is an important part of many parts of your cells, hormones and other activities in your body. Your liver makes cholesterol and you can also get it from food. There are several forms of cholesterol as well as other fats moving around your body in your blood.

Cholesterol in Foods

Cholesterol is made in the liver, and is only found in foods that come from animal sources. Plants do not have livers to make cholesterol so they contain no cholesterol in their natural form.

Meats, poultry, fish, and dairy foods all contain cholesterol.

Fruits, vegetables, grains, nuts, seeds and oils do not contain cholesterol.

Types of Fats in Food

Different fats can increase or decrease your risk of heart disease. Not all fats are bad. Science is always discovering new information about this subject. Years ago, we worried about cholesterol; now we know that saturated, unsaturated and trans fats are also important.

Saturated Fats can increase your risk of heart disease. Most saturated fats come from animal sources including meat fats (beef, pork, chicken), cheeses, butter and tropical oils (coconut, palm kernel and palm oil).

Unsaturated Fats can reduce your risk of heart disease. There are two kinds of unsaturated fats: monounsaturated fat and polyunsaturated fat. They come from foods like oils, nuts, seeds, avocados and fatty fish (tuna, herring, salmon, sardines).

Trans Fats and Hydrogenated Oils will raise your risk of heart disease and diabetes. These are in many processed foods such as fried foods, stick margarine and some baked goods. If you see the words “partially hydrogenated __ oil” in the food label ingredients, there are unhealthy fats in it.

A healthy diet includes unsaturated fats, limits saturated fats and keeps hydrogenated oils and trans fats as low as possible. You can find more information about diet and heart disease along with recipes at the American Heart Association website:

http://www.heart.org/HEARTORG/HealthyLiving/HealthyEating/Healthy-Eating_UCM_001188_SubHomePage.jsp

Diabetes—An Everyday Reality

Every 21 seconds, someone is diagnosed with diabetes. More than 30 million adults and children have diabetes. You probably know someone with diabetes. How do you help them deal with it? It's a 24/7 disease, and food is one of the hardest parts to manage since you have to face eating several times a day, every day.

How can you help?

- remember a diabetic diet is really just healthy eating. Plan healthy meals when entertaining someone with diabetes. Protein, vegetables, a lettuce salad, fruit and a small amount of starch is good.
- offering fresh fruit for dessert instead of a gooey dessert is a really nice thing to do. A bowl of mixed berries with some aerosol whipped cream is an enticing choice for everyone.
- do not "guilt" someone with diabetes into eating something they do not want or more than they want. Let them decide what is best for them.
- plan activities together that do not always involve food.
- go for a walk after a meal together.

November is American Diabetes Month. This year, the American Diabetes Association just launched a new "Diabetes Food Hub" website to help manage diabetes. It's an awesome tool so take some time to check it out for yourself or someone you know with diabetes. If your friend is not computer-savvy, get them together with your computer so they can enjoy this site too.

<https://www.diabetesfoodhub.org>

Along with hundreds of tasty recipes providing meal inspiration and healthy eating tips, the site offers a Meal Planner which calculates nutrition information and creates a shopping list. Nutrition Facts are available for each recipe with carbohydrates, calories, fat, protein, sodium, phosphorus and potassium. You can filter recipes by preferences such as low sodium, vegetarian, budget-friendly and gluten-free. You can also create a profile, and the site will learn your preferences over time and offer suggestions.

Whether you have diabetes or not, you may enjoy looking over the Food Hub for healthy eating ideas for everyone.

Snack Ideas for Seniors

As we age, our food needs to provide more nutrition per bite. We have less “free” calories than when we were younger.

Snacks tend to be foods that are fast and easy to eat, and often high in fat, salt and sugar. Fats, salt and sugars are foods many of us need to eat less of so what are some alternatives to our usual snacks?

-Eat Less. If you know the food is not a healthy choice, eat less of it and add something healthy to balance it. Try one small gingersnap cookie with a handful of grapes. Or mix some fat-free popcorn with the Fritos.

-Substitute. If you crave a certain flavor and texture, it is a good idea to substitute a food with the same flavor and texture and more nutrition.

Replace ice cream with frozen fruit (frozen blueberries and frozen bananas work especially well). You can dip frozen fruit pieces into vanilla yogurt, and the yogurt will stick to the surface making a creamy coating.

Sweet and chewy sensations can come from dried fruit as well as jelly beans. Dried apricots are very nutritious and especially tasty dipped in melted dark chocolate and cooled on wax paper.

If you prefer salty/crunchy flavors, try baked snack chips, flavored rice cakes or pretzels.

If you need to reduce salt, try celery or jicama slices with cream cheese, peanut butter or hummus. Fresh produce has almost no salt and plenty of satisfying crunch.

-Add Protein. Seniors need to be sure to get enough protein so adding in protein with each snack is a good way to add nutrition. Easy protein sources are foods such as string cheese, hummus, nuts and nut butters (look for peanut butter in the refrigerator section by the butters and margarines. These brands often have only peanuts and salt in them, and are already mixed so you do not need to stir the oil in). Cottage cheese with fruit is a great snack or can be a light meal with some crackers and carrot sticks.

Skinny Honey Nut Snack Mix

This mix from Betty Crocker has 76% fewer calories than the original recipe. Toss together this sweet and salty, healthified munchie mix—complete with chocolate— for a midday pick-me-up.

Using cereal helps boost the nutrition factor since cereal is fortified with many vitamins and minerals. Less cheddar fish crackers and chocolate pieces are used since the mix is partly cereal and pretzels.

Adding nuts would boost the protein content. Plain pecans or walnuts would be a nice addition to this mix.

Ingredients

1 cup Honey Nut Cheerios™ cereal
3/4 cup bite-size whole grain cheddar cheese fish-shape crackers
1/2 cup honey wheat braided pretzel twists, broken into bite-size pieces
1/2 cup semisweet or dark chocolate pieces

Directions

In a large bowl, combine cereal, crackers, pretzels, and chocolate pieces. Store in an airtight container.

Nutrition Information–1 Serving

Recipe makes 6 servings.

Calories 130
Calories from Fat 50
Total Fat 6g
Saturated Fat 3g
Trans Fat 0g
Cholesterol 0mg
Sodium 140mg
Total Carbohydrate 21g
Dietary Fiber 2g
Sugars 10g
Protein 2g

% Daily Value*:

Vitamin A 2%
Vitamin C 2%
Calcium 4%
Iron 10%

Exchanges: 1 Starch; 1/2 Other Carbohydrate;1 Fat.

Carbohydrate Choice: 1 1/2

**Percent Daily Values are based on a 2,000-calorie diet.*

<http://www.bettycrocker.com/recipes/skinny-honey-nut-snack-mix/f6b447c8-f55c-4d59-85e1-6133faff54ee>

Senior Citizens are at Nutrition Risk

One in four senior citizens has poor nutrition. Some of the causes are due to their environment, some are due to medical situations and some are emotional. Common causes of poor appetite include:

- Living alone and eating alone
- Lack of interest in cooking
- Illnesses requiring diet restrictions or affecting appetite
- Medication side effects
- Trouble chewing or swallowing
- Depression and dementia
- Not able to get to the store and bring food home
- No money to buy food

There is no one-size-fits-all solution. If a person is showing signs of not eating well, their situation needs to be checked individually since there are so many possible issues. Medical issues should be handled by the person's doctor. Pharmacists can tell if their medications affect appetite or taste perception. Social services can help connect people with food delivery services or food pantries to help get food into their home.

Jazz Up Your Meal Planning

Living alone and trying to cook for one person can be discouraging even if there are no other medical or financial problems. In this case, keep in mind that poor nutrition leads to a weaker immune system, and a higher risk of illness and mental confusion. If you want to be healthy and active, make an effort to eat well. Put high quality fuel in your energy tank!

Make meals special events. Arrange potlucks or share meals with friends as often as possible. If you eat alone, make it something to look forward to. What would you enjoy? A special placemat and napkins? Fresh flowers? A great book? Background music? A recorded book?

You are what you eat. Your plate should be half fruits and vegetables, one-fourth protein and one-fourth starch or grain. Change up how you plan meals. Plan your meal starting with the vegetables and fruits, then add some protein, and finally add the starch.

For example:

-instead of starting with a can of soup, start with some frozen vegetables. Add them to that can of chicken noodle soup along with some kidney beans for extra protein.

-start with salad greens and top with a drained can of marinated beans. Add some canned tuna over the top. The marinade will probably provide enough flavor so that you will not need salad dressing. Add some high fiber crackers and fruit, and you have every food group.

-apples taste amazing at this time of year. Slice up an apple and spread peanut butter on each slice as you eat it. Cheese and apple slices taste great together too.

-heat up frozen stir fry vegetables, mix in some leftover meat and pour an oriental sauce of your choice over it all. You can also add leftover pasta or rice. If you want rice, cook up a pot of rice for this meal, then freeze the leftovers in individual portion sizes so you have rice handy for another meal.

-restaurant meals are usually oversized so plan to bring home leftovers. Either eat them right away or freeze them. These are usually protein and starch so add some extra frozen vegetables alongside when you microwave them.

-another tip to add vegetables so the meal meets the “plate” guidelines is add extra frozen vegetables to a microwave frozen dinner. Add some fruit to your frozen dinner meal to round out the nutrition.

Breakfast is an important meal. After nothing to eat all night, people are usually hungry in the morning. This meal is often the same starchy meal every day. Add protein. Add variety.

-Overnight oats is a popular breakfast right now. Put everything together in a jar the day before, place it in the refrigerator and breakfast will be waiting for you the next morning.

Combine:

1/3-1/2 cup dry old-fashioned rolled oats

1/3-1/2 cup liquid of choice (cow’s milk, almond milk, coconut milk or other milk of choice)

1/3-1/2 cup yogurt, if you want.

Add the “add ins” to suit your taste: fresh or dried fruits, chopped nuts, coconut, spices, nut butters, citrus zest, maple syrup or honey.

Place in a jar or container, mix well and refrigerate overnight or at least 5 hours. Add more liquid if needed in the morning. Take from the refrigerator and eat cold the next day. See

the blog post below for a more detailed description.

<http://blog.foodnetwork.com/healthyeats/2015/05/13/overnight-oats-for-breakfast/>

Sodium Can Be Sneaky

February is National Heart Month. One of the things you can do to help your heart health is watch your salt, or sodium, intake. Table salt is about 40% sodium and 60% chloride. Although the words salt and sodium are both used, sodium is the substance that affects heart health and the more accurate word to use.

The Center for Disease Control says that 9 out of 10 American adults and children eat more sodium than recommended. Extra sodium is linked to high blood pressure, a leading cause of heart disease, stroke, kidney disease and other problems.

The American Heart Association and other health organizations advise no more than 2,300 mg of sodium a day, and the ideal limit for most healthy adults is 1,500 mg. The average American eats more than 3,400 mg each day. Even if you cannot reach the target, it is worth learning how much you eat and trying to reduce it. There are some medical situations that require different sodium intake goals. Follow whatever advice your doctor has given you.

Most of the excess sodium in your diet comes from restaurant, processed and prepackaged foods. In 2016, the Food and Drug Administration proposed voluntary targets for food processors to lower the sodium in processed foods. Many of these foods have food labeling, so you can read the label to see how much sodium is in the food. Be sure to check the serving size. Compare the amount you eat to the serving size on the package. You may need to multiply the sodium amount on the label if you eat more than the serving size.

If you use table salt, $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon of salt has 575 mg sodium. Many recipes will work fine with less salt as long as you replace the flavor with other spices and seasonings. If you make your own yeast bread, you must leave the salt in the recipe or the bread will not rise properly.

We learned to like salty flavors as children. If you reduce your sodium intake, you will find your preference for salty flavors decreases in 4-8 weeks. Here are some tips to reduce sodium:

Breakfast: Add color with fruits and vegetables. For example, in your breakfast omelet, replace 1 oz. cheese (468 mg sodium) with $\frac{1}{4}$ cup spinach and $\frac{1}{4}$ cup mushrooms (7 mg sodium).

Morning snack: Satisfy your sweet tooth with fresh fruit instead of baked goods. Banana bread=181 mg sodium vs banana=1 mg sodium

Lunch: Use vegetables on your sandwiches as condiments. Replace a pickle spear (283 mg sodium) with ½ sliced cucumber (1 mg sodium) or substitute 1 tomato slice (1 mg sodium) for 1 teaspoon mustard (55 mg sodium).

Afternoon snack: Eat unsalted nuts (0 mg sodium) if you are craving something crunchy instead of 1 oz. potato chips (148 mg sodium).

Dinner: Prepare food at home and take control of your sodium intake. Fresh meats, fish, poultry, fresh or frozen plain vegetables and fruits are all low in sodium. Draining and rinsing canned vegetables and beans can reduce the sodium content by about half. Experiment with herbs, spices, vinegars and citrus fruits to add flavor. Fish and chicken tastes great with a fruit salsa topping instead of BBQ sauce or cheese.

Using more fruits and vegetables will also help you eat more potassium, another beneficial nutrient for heart health.

For more details about reducing sodium, see the American Heart Association's blog <https://healthyforgood.heart.org/eat-smart>

Why?

Nutrition advice keeps changing. It is frustrating. Butter and eggs are bad, then they are OK. Watch out for coffee, then it helps prevent diabetes. Which oil is best to use? Why can't those nutrition experts make up their minds?

When you hear the latest nutrition headlines, remember:

-Nutrition is a young science and is still evolving. It was only between 1930-67 that the first vitamins were isolated and identified with specific actions in the body. Before then, people had observed some foods had certain effects, but the substances had not been isolated and their specific actions outlined.

-Lab techniques are constantly improving. In the past, we could only measure total cholesterol in the bloodstream. Now we can measure a range of different cholesterol types and components. As more detailed information is available, the advice can change.

-Information in the media is often out of context. Our society likes concise, fast-paced information. Much information is presented in soundbites of a few seconds. Abbreviated information is often misinterpreted because important details are missing. In addition, there is just too much information available. The results of a single study might be reported now, whereas in the past that information might not have been publicized until several studies had shown the same results.

How do I sort out all this information?

-Accept that medical science is constantly evolving and things will change. As far as nutrition, the basics are still the same. Eat fruits and vegetables, have protein and calcium sources daily, consume whole grains, and balance your calorie intake with energy used.

-Determine your own needs and risk factors. Pay attention to the details that are important for your own health, and do not get too involved in information that is not critical for you.

-Find reliable sources of information for your question. Health is a huge topic, and no one has all the answers.

There are many "mail order" nutrition degrees which are not valid. A qualified nutrition professional has a college degree in nutrition (2 or 4 years), followed by specialized training before taking a credentialing exam. These people have the initials of RD, RDN and DTR after their names. They are required to take continuing education to maintain their credential and follow a code of ethics. The Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics is the professional association for nutrition professionals; their website has consumer

information and referral information.

<http://www.eatright.org>

Online, government or specialized agencies such as the American Heart Association, American Diabetes Association of the American Cancer Association are often your most unbiased sources of accurate information.

Some government sites which may be useful are:

Choose My Plate

<https://nccih.nih.gov>

National Center for Complementary and Integrative Health

<https://nccih.nih.gov>

Questions? Where to Find Answers.

When I was a dietetic intern, I was given a great piece of advice. There is far more nutrition information than your brain can recall, and it is constantly changing. You will not know the answer to every question. What matters is knowing where to look for an accurate answer.

I've heard a lot of questions during the nearly 38 years I've been a Registered Dietitian. Resources have changed over the years. We used to use books, magazines, and people for answers. About 10 years ago, a group told me "The Food Channel" was their source of nutrition information. Now I suspect the computer is the major information source. Here are some reliable online resources for some common questions I hear:

Food storage. How long will this keep? How long can I freeze this?

<https://www.nutrition.gov/subject/shopping-cooking-meal-planning/food-storage-and-preservation>

How do I store my fresh fruits and vegetables? How do I know if they are ripe?

<https://snaped.fns.usda.gov/seasonal-produce-guide>

This page lists fruits and vegetables in season in winter, spring, summer and fall. If you click on the name of a fruit or vegetable in the list, it will open up a page of information about that item including nutrition data, recipes and preservation and storage advice.

Most larger grocery stores have a binder in the produce department with information about the fruits and vegetables. It is usually quite large with laminated pages. If you don't see it, ask for help to find it.

Where can I find recipes for _____?

This is a hard question. Everyone is looking for something different.

If you need recipes for a special diet, go to the website for the national foundation for that illness. For example, here is the link for recipes from the American Heart Association. <https://recipes.heart.org/en>

If you like to look through cookbooks, I suggest browsing at the library or bookstore. Or search on Amazon for your topic of interest paired with the search term "cookbook" for book suggestions.

I find magazine and newspaper food sections helpful. They reflect new ideas and trends. Browse magazines and newspapers in the library or at a large bookstore.

My daughter's generation goes directly to the computer. They enter the details about the recipe they want, and usually lots of recipes pop up. With this method, the more details you put in your search, the better. It is a fast and easy way to find recipes for special diets or specific ingredients.

I don't understand food labels.

<https://www.eatright.org/food/nutrition/nutrition-facts-and-food-labels/the-basics-of-the-nutrition-facts-label>

<https://www.fda.gov/food/labelingnutrition/ucm274593.htm>

I need recipes on cooking for one person.

If you know how to cook already, add these phrases to your thought patterns—"Great! I don't have to cater to anyone else's food preferences" and "Feeding my body high-quality fuel will help it keep running better". Love leftovers because that means you don't have to cook as often. Find a friend to share meals or leftovers with. And remember that a well-balanced, healthy meal can be soup and sandwich or an entree salad, it does not have to be a full cooked "dinner".

You are not alone. When I "googled" cooking-for-one, 1,420,000,000 results appeared in 0.54 seconds. Here are two websites to start with:

<http://www.pbs.org/food/theme/cooking-for-one/>

<https://www.allrecipes.com/recipes/15050/everyday-cooking/cooking-for-one/>

I need ideas for cooking on a limited budget.

<https://cookbooks.leannebrown.com/good-and-cheap.pdf>

<https://snaped.fns.usda.gov/nutrition-education/nutrition-education-materials/meal-planning-shopping-and-budgeting>

<http://cookingmatters.org/recipes>

What should I eat?

<https://www.choosemyplate.gov/older-adults>

What do you think about this herbal therapy/nutrition supplement/natural treatment?

<https://nccih.nih.gov>

Where can I find information about what to eat for my health condition?

Start looking on the website for the national association for that disease such as:

www.diabetes.org

www.heart.org

www.cancer.org

www.alz.org

Information about fresh food does not change much. After all, we've been eating meats, fruits, vegetables, dairy food and grains for centuries.

Information about processed food more complex since the food industry is always inventing new ingredients and products. You have to understand how to use a nutrition label, and you have to evaluate the food marketing.

Information about nutrition is the most complicated. Nutrition is a young science; the first vitamins were discovered in 1912. As medical knowledge increases, our understanding of nutrition increases. New information sometimes leads to changes in advice. It is frustrating when the advice seems to change every few years. Rely on resources that are impartial (not selling a product) and based on current nutrition research for your best nutrition information.

Calcium Calculations and Tips

Are you getting enough calcium?

The Recommended Dietary Allowance (RDA) for a healthy man over age 51 is 1,000 mg/day and for a healthy women over age 51 is 1,200 mg/day. Your doctor may give you different guidelines depending on your health situation.

How much calcium do I get from my food?

General estimates for calcium in food are:

Assume 250 mg calcium/day for all non-dairy and non-calcium-fortified foods per day.

Dairy and calcium-fortified foods are usually around 300 mg calcium/serving. A serving would be: 8 oz. milk, 8 oz. yogurt, 1.5 oz hard cheese, 8 oz calcium-fortified orange juice. Add up the number of calcium-rich food servings you eat daily and multiply by 300.

Calcium varies in non-dairy milks (soy, rice, almond, hemp, coconut). Check the label. The Daily Value for calcium is 1000 mg so 30% of the Percent Daily Value of calcium would be 300 mg.

Add 250 mg to your dairy/fortified food intake to find your calcium intake from food.

How much calcium do I get from supplements?

Add up the amount in your multivitamin and any calcium supplements you take. This information will be on the label. Be sure to check the number of pills in a serving size. The label information is for one serving which is not always one pill.

If you take calcium supplements, here are some tips:

-calcium absorption is best when you take 500 mg calcium or less so avoid taking doses larger than 500 mg at one time. Some supplements offer smaller pills and doses.

-calcium supplements are generally either calcium carbonate or calcium citrate. Calcium carbonate is less expensive and less well absorbed. It needs to be taken with food. Tums and Rolaids are calcium carbonate. Calcium citrate is absorbed equally well on either a full or empty stomach and with low stomach acid; however, it is more expensive. The label on the supplement bottle will tell you whether the pill is calcium carbonate or calcium citrate.

-be sure your calcium supplement includes Vitamin D. This helps with absorption.

-calcium can react with some medications. Check with your pharmacist for any interactions.

Summary

Add your daily calcium intake from food to your calcium intake from supplements and compare it to your recommended intake. Adjust your food or supplements to meet the goal. Talk to your physician or local pharmacist if you have questions.

For more information about calcium, visit the website:

www.ods.od.nih.gov/factsheets/Calcium-Consumer/?print=1

Holiday Challenge

The “holiday season” runs from Halloween until the Super Bowl. With too much food around, and darkness and bad weather keeping you inside, how do you avoid gaining weight?

In 1994, the National Weight Control Registry began to investigate how people maintained weight loss. The study is still running today; you can find more information at <http://www.nwcr.ws>.

The researchers found that successful weight maintainers used the following strategies:

78% eat breakfast every day

75% weight themselves at least once a week

62% watch less than 10 hours of TV a week

90% exercise an average of one hours/day

These are activities anyone can work into their routine. Walking is fine exercise; four sets of 15-minute walks would equal an hour.

People used different eating approaches to control their calories. The most common is to reduce fat since that cuts out a lot of calories quickly. Most people with successful weight control record what they eat with a written or online recording system.

Another way to manage calories is to use Volumetrics, lifestyle plan developed by Dr. Barbara Rolls at Pennsylvania State University. People love her approach of “feeling full on fewer calories”.

The short version of her plan is:

- reduce fat
- eat enough lean protein
- choose foods high in fiber
- eat foods low in energy density.

“Eat foods low in energy density” means to lower the calories per bite of food so that you can eat the same volume of food with less calories. Eating a lower-fat version of a food will do this. By eating foods high in low-calorie “volume” such as water, air and fiber, you can also lower the calories per bite. For example:

-whipped cream has less calories per bite than ice cream or pudding because it contains more air. Try whipped cream and fruit for dessert. The aerosol can whipped cream is fun for folks of all ages.

-putting your protein and vegetables in a soup instead of a pot roast will reduce the calories per bite because the soup has a higher water content than the roast and the water will help you feel full.

-eat a main dish salad instead of a sandwich. Lettuce and salad greens are high in water so they make a lower calorie base than bread for meat, cheese and veggies.

-make your holiday dessert a meringue or angel food cake base with fruit or sauce toppings. These desserts contain a lot of air.

For more information and recipes, look at Dr. Rolls’ latest book: *The Ultimate Volumetrics Diet: Smart, Simple, Science-Based Strategies for Losing Weight and Keeping It Off* , 2013, by Dr. Barbara Rolls and Mindy Hermann.

Soup Re-Do

Warm and nourishing, canned soups are an easy meal, but they can be extremely high in sodium. The 2015-2020 Dietary Guidelines advise a sodium intake of less than 2,300 mg/day for an average healthy adult. Most Americans eat more than this, averaging about 3,400 mg/day. Your doctor may have given you a different goal as sodium intake can affect blood pressure, stroke and heart disease risk.

A whole can of regular soup can easily provide over 1,000 mg/sodium. Lower sodium choices are available so look around for some new choices next time you are at the store.

-Read the Nutrition Facts Panel

First, check the number of servings in the can. Many cans contain more than one serving, but the nutrition facts label numbers are only for one serving. If your can has more than one serving, multiply the numbers on the label by the number of servings you intend to eat.

Next, look at the sodium numbers. If you have a personal sodium goal, you can use the milligram number. Otherwise, look at the % Daily Value section. If the % Daily Value is 5% or less, the item is low in sodium. If the % Daily Value is 20% or more, the item is high in sodium.

The front of the label can be confusing. Soups labelled “organic” or “natural” are not always low in sodium. Soups labelled “less sodium” or “light” may or may not provide less than 20% Daily Value of sodium, Look for words like “unsalted”, “no salt added” or “sodium free” for the lowest amount of sodium. Foods contain some sodium naturally so you will not see zero sodium on a soup label.

Some of the following brands have sodium levels below the 20% Daily Value:

Amy’s—light in sodium

Campbell’s Healthy Recipes

Healthy Choice

Healthy Valley Organic—no salt added

Imagine—light in sodium

-Enhance the nutrition

Make sure your soup is more than broth with a few noodles. If the soup is your main dish, it should contain vegetables, starch and protein.

-Add plain frozen vegetables and leftover chicken to a can of chicken noodle soup.

-add leftover rice and leftover meat to tomato soup along with a dab of horseradish.

-Make it tasty

Try some of these seasonings to add flavor. Tiny amounts of highly flavorful ingredients will make a big difference.

Garlic

Herbs, spices

Horseradish

Lemon or lime juice

Peppers, black and red

Ready-to-use pesto

Salsa

Sesame oil

Thai curry paste

-Balance the meal

If your soup is a full-meal soup (protein, starch and vegetables), then you only need to add a fruit and calcium source for a balanced meal. Fruit is a great side dish with soup because it contains almost no sodium so balances out the sodium in the soup,

If you need to add protein to the meal, consider celery sticks or jicama slices with nut butter or hummus instead of cheese and crackers. Crackers tend to be high in sodium, but raw vegetables are quite low. Although there is some sodium in nut butters and hummus, it is usually less than in cheeses.

-Make your own soup

Homemade soup sounds like a big job, but it can be very easy. Using a low sodium meat stock or bouillon, you can add frozen vegetables, chopped cooked meat, leftover grain, some seasonings, and have a quick meal with minimal effort.

The following brands have unsalted broth/stocks:

Swanson Unsalted Stocks

Swanson Unsalted Broths

Kitchen Basics, Unsalted Stocks

Herb-ox, Sodium-free, granulated bouillon

Try chicken broth with a dash of lemon juice and some pesto stirred in, along with some frozen Italian vegetables, leftover chicken, and cooked grain. Instant brown rice, couscous or quinoa are quick and easy to fix, and have leftovers for another meal.

Outsmart Arthritis When You Cook

Gadgets and new ways to do a job will make it easier to cook. Since eating healthy will help you feel better, invest some time and money into making cooking easier.

Save Energy

Fatigue is common with arthritis. Use energy-saving strategies like:

Batch cook. Prepare extra and freeze whenever possible.

Use a crockpot/slow cooker. Prepare the recipe in the morning when you have more energy, enjoy the meal in the evening, and save or freeze the leftovers. Cleaning a crockpot liner can be difficult; fill it with soap and water to soak until a helper is around to scour it for you. Use a measuring cup to pour water into the liner instead of carrying it full.

Microwave. This works especially well with leftovers, soups or frozen vegetables. Many foods can be heated on paper plates, avoiding the process of moving plates to and from a dishwasher. Invest in a microwave dish cover so you do not need to clean the microwave as often.

Use grocery shopping services. Today stores bag and take your groceries your car or have you call in an order and pick it up curbside or provide full online ordering delivered to your home. Explore what is available around you.

Minimize clean up. Cook one-pot meals, serve from the pan instead of a serving dish, use paper and plastic products for a crowd. Line pans with foil, and baking sheets with baking parchment.

Use a tool instead of your hands. Use an electric can opener or electric knife, open packages with scissors, cut open sealed plastic tops instead of pulling the tiny tabs.

Grip Tight

Arthritic hands are not as strong as usual so look for these things.

Textured surfaces on glasses and dishes are less likely to slip from weak fingers.

Lighter-weight dishes and utensils. Plastic is lighter than crockery, aluminum is lighter than steel. Corelle dishes are lightweight, chip-resistant and easy-care.

Larger handles are easier to hold. Look for softer and ridged surfaces too.

Adaptive cutting boards are available with spikes and edges to grip items you are cutting. Boards with suction cups will not slip on the countertop.

Ridged flexible plastic shelf liner can be cut into squares to help grip and turn knobs more easily or build up a utensil handle.

Many specialized tools are available. If you need individualized advice, there are occupational therapists who specialize in hand problems. Ask your doctor for a referral.

Choose Food Strategically

Precut items. Buy precut fruits and vegetables, precut meats for stew and stir-fry, precut and precooked deli meat, grated and sliced cheese, make a salad at a store salad bar to take home.

Frozen fruits and vegetables. Bags are easier to open than cans or chopping fresh items. Frozen items without sauces are low in sodium.

Frozen convenience dinners can be healthy. Look for meals with whole grains, sodium and saturated fat below 20% Daily Value. Some good brands are: SmartMade, Luvo, Healthy Choice Simply Steamers, Healthy Choice Power Bowls, Kashi, Amy's, and Mann's Nourish Bowls. Add some fruit and a dairy item to round out the meal.

Look on the back of Green Giant's Riced Veggies Cauliflower Medley for a simple Cauliflower Fried Rice recipe that is ready in 10 minutes. The vegetables are all ready to cook in the package, and you add some garlic, ginger and soy sauce along with leftover meat, fish, poultry and/or scrambled eggs.

Find recipe ideas here:

<https://www.arthritis.org/living-with-arthritis/arthritis-diet/recipes/>

Find gadgets here:

Oxo products have many adaptive features and are available in multiple places: department stores, Target, WalMart, online at Amazon or at

<https://www.oxo.com/products/preparing>

<https://www.oxo.com/products/cooking-baking>

North Coast Medical provides adaptive equipment of all kinds including a substantial selection of cooking tools. www.ncmedical.com/retail

Get Creative with Soft Food

Sometimes you need softer food. It might be issues with your teeth, dry mouth or a medication side effect. Sometimes it is just for a few days, and other times it is a longer problem. You can still have flavorful and healthy food without a diet of soup, smoothies and commercial meal replacements. If you have a serious issue with chewing and swallowing, or dysphagia, contact your health care team. These suggestions are not designed for complex health issues.

The longer a food takes to digest, the longer you will feel full. Liquids leave your stomach quickly, and you feel hungry in an hour or so. Different nutrients take different amounts of time to digest. Carbohydrates are digested most quickly, followed by proteins and then fats. So, including protein and fat in a meal helps you feel full as well as providing nutrition. Fiber also helps slow down digestion; it is added to many of the commercial meal replacement products and can be included in regular meals too.

If it is hard to chew, try casseroles, hot dishes, stews, soups, hot cereals, puddings, custards, ice cream, smoothies and meal replacements. Canned fruits and vegetables and frozen vegetables cook up soft enough to eat. Meats and poultry can be marinated to make them more tender, and baking them with a sauce will be them more tender and moist.

If your mouth is dry, moist foods will be more comfortable to eat. Soups, stews and casseroles are logical choices. Adding a sauce to vegetables or meats is helpful; think beyond cheese sauce and gravy. Fruit salsas or applesauce taste great with pork and fish. Pour BBQ sauce over chicken or pork chops, cover the pan tightly with foil and bake for an hour at 350 degrees; you'll have tender meat with a tasty sauce. Mayonnaise and cream cheese can add moisture, but not a lot of nutrition value.

Other useful nutritious softer foods include:

Avocado—Mash two ripe avocados with the juice of one lime, and add some salt and pepper. Store with plastic wrap tightly against the guacamole to prevent air reaching it. The lime juice will delay browning for a few days. Use this spread instead of cheese on polenta or burgers or enjoy eating on its own.

Polenta—Polenta is a soft, cornmeal product that is a staple in northern Italy. It is available precooked and packaged in tubes in local grocery stores. All you need to do is slice it, heat it and eat it. Many people fry or

toast it, but it is fine heated in the microwave to keep it soft. Top it with maple syrup and butter for a breakfast treat or a tomato sauce with frozen vegetables, cooked ground meat and Parmesan cheese for a full meal.

Eggs—Despite their higher cholesterol content, eggs contain the ideal mixture of proteins for humans and are the gold standard other proteins are measured against. Scrambled eggs, an omelet or frittata is a great way to get protein through a sore mouth.

Greek Yogurt—Greek yogurt is a condensed version of regular yogurt so it has a higher concentration of protein per bite. Eat whatever flavor appeals to you. It also makes a great sauce for cut-up fruits as it helps delay browning and adds some moisture.

Beans and hummus—drain and rinse canned legumes, then mash them with olive oil and seasonings to taste. This is a good high-fiber, high-protein side dish. Hummus is mashed chickpeas with tahini (ground sesame seeds), another great high-fiber protein source which can be tasty eaten by itself. Many hummus flavors are available in local groceries.

Cottage cheese—this popular ingredient is a great source of protein. It can be eaten plain with fruit or mixed into jello salads to add nutrition.

If you have trouble eating enough or are losing weight, here are some ideas to add both calories and nutrition. Add extras to every dish and beverage so you get maximum calories and nutrition per bite.

Supplement soups and casseroles

Add grated cheese on top

Mix in extra meat—for example, canned tuna in tomato soup, cooked hamburger in vegetable soup, extra meat in the hot dish

Dilute condensed soups with milk instead of water

Powerpack cooked cereals

Add a tablespoon or two of nut butter to a bowl of cereal

Add jelly instead of sugar

Mix in thawed frozen fruits

Add-in anywhere possible

Toppings on potatoes— use sour cream, cheese and chili

Applesauce or nut butters on pancakes

Make cocoa with a whole milk instead of water

Nut butters in pudding (chocolate peanut butter pudding, anyone?)

Summer Nutrition Challenge 2018

This summer, we challenge you to add some healthy nutrition habits to your routine. Every month, we'll suggest a new challenge. See how many days during the month you can meet that goal! If it does not fit in with your doctor's advice for you, do not participate.

Share ideas at St. Anthony Park Area Senior events about how to meet that month's goal, and let us know how you like this activity.

June—Eat one green vegetable every day.

Farmer's markets have fresh produce now, and there are lots of vegetable choices. Frozen vegetables and precut vegetables from produce departments and salad bars work too.

Think green—broccoli, spinach, kale, lettuce, green beans, peas, Brussel sprouts, cabbage, celery, green peppers, mesclun, asparagus, artichokes,

rapini (broccoli rabe), leeks, kohlrabi, scallions, zucchini, cucumbers, green onions, okra, endive, fennel, arugula, and bok choy,

In general, the deeper the color of a vegetable, the more nutritious it is. However, all vegetables offer great nutrition and fiber so don't ignore celery and iceberg lettuce. Just eat a variety of shades of green.

Eat these as cooked side dishes, mixed into hot dishes, soups or pasta salads, added to cold salads, and as snacks. If you can't think of anything else, have some peanut butter on a celery stick for a cool, crunchy snack.

July—Drink one extra glass of water every day.

As you get older, your thirst alert system does not work as well as when you were younger. You may not recognize that you are thirsty or you may have different symptoms like a headache, muscle cramps, dry mouth, constipation or fatigue. You can't rely on thirst so make an extra effort to drink enough, especially when it is hot.

Our July challenge is to drink one extra glass of water a day. Jazz up regular tap water with some slices of fresh fruit, cucumber or ginger.

Or buy one of a multitude of flavored waters, and check the label to see if it has calories or not. Choose waters that have zero calories per serving.

To get into a habit of drinking water, the easiest way is to pair it with another activity. When you brush your teeth, drink a full glass of water instead of a sip. Add an

extra glass of water with your mealtime beverage. Or drink a glass of water for every cup of coffee or tea.

Although caffeine is a diuretic, research indicates that you gain more fluid from a caffeinated beverage than you lose. Liquids like milk and foods like soup also provide fluid for the body. However, water is your best source so drink up!

August—eat one extra serving a fruit a day

Late summer brings an abundance of fresh fruits to our stores. Minnesota's fruits include apples, berries of all kinds, melons of all kinds, grapes, and plums. Many other fruits from other states are available too including cherries and my favorite, Colorado peaches. Sweet and juicy, fresh fruits in season are a treat for any meal or snack.

The U.S. Dietary Guidelines suggest that most adults need at least 1.5-2 cups of fruit daily. Are you eating that much? How do you estimate shapes like a watermelon slice or a banana? Imagine the item cut into small pieces, look at a measuring cup, and make your best guess.

According to the Produce for Better Health Foundation, older consumers are eating less fruits and vegetables than in the past. Recent survey data from the Centers for Disease Control indicate that only 12.8% of Minnesotans over age 50 are meeting the fruit intake recommendations. The Foundation suspects one reason may be that the dinner meal has changed to a "one dish" meal rather than a "meat with side dishes" meal. Keep the USDA My Plate guideline in mind and make half of your plate fruits and vegetables. If you have a "one dish" meal, be sure it contains lots of vegetables and have some fruit on the side. At this time of year, adding an extra serving of fruit each day should be an easy challenge to meet!