



NEWS RELEASE

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Selecting the right ingredients can boost meal enjoyment

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FORT LEE, Va. – If you find calorie counting contemptible and can't help but view small portions as punishment, there is another way to help those holiday pounds keep melting away – keep a close watch on ingredients and cooking methods.

Include more fruits and vegetables in your recipes and overall diet. All forms count – fresh, frozen, canned and dried. Watch out for added sodium, though, especially with commercial broths, canned tomatoes, canned beans and even canned vegetables. Use low-sodium broth or make your own, and choose no-salt-added versions of tomatoes, beans and vegetables.

If using canned fruits, go for those canned in water or their own natural juice. Fruits and vegetables added to recipes provide a big boost to flavor, but very few calories and normally little to no fat.

Choose fats wisely. A gram of fat has more than twice the calories (9) as a gram of carbohydrate or a gram of protein (4), so scan both recipes and nutrition facts panels of packaged ingredients carefully. Smart substitutions, such as those in the Creamless Creamy Tomato Soup recipe featured this week produce excellent results while drastically cutting both calories and fat content.

Choose leaner cuts of meat whenever possible. The leanest beef cuts include round steaks and roasts (eye of round, top round, bottom round, round tip), top loin, top sirloin, and chuck shoulder and arm roasts. Choose extra lean ground beef – the label should say at least “90%

lean.” The leanest pork choices include pork loin, tenderloin, center loin, and ham. Boneless skinless chicken breasts and turkey cutlets are the leanest poultry choices.

Replace high-fat cooking methods with lower-fat techniques. Bake or broil rather than fry as much as possible. When a nicely browned exterior is needed for flavor development, try using just a teaspoon or two of oil for browning, then add a small amount of water to the pan, cover with a tight-fitting lid and steam until tender. This works wonderfully for skinless, boneless chicken breasts.

Use these four simple principles to automatically reduce calories enough that you no longer have to count them. And, if you stick to it well enough, you should be able to increase your portion size to a point where the looks of the dish alone provides some satisfaction even before you take the first bite. This week’s recipe collection demonstrates these smart cooking tips deliciously.

Favorite Vegetable Soup (Serves 8-10)

Ingredients:

- 1/2 pound ground chuck
- 7 cups peeled, chopped fresh tomatoes or 2 (28-ounce) cans no salt added diced tomatoes
- 4 cups water
- 1 (14.5-ounce) can no salt added cut green beans, drained and rinsed
- 1 (15-ounce) can no salt added peas, drained and rinsed
- 1 (15.25-ounce) can no salt added corn, drained and rinsed
- 2 medium carrots, peeled and chopped
- 3 medium potatoes, peeled and diced
- 1 medium onion, diced
- 1/4 cup uncooked rice
- 1/8 teaspoon ground black pepper
- 1/8 teaspoon red pepper flakes
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 1/2 teaspoon garlic powder

Directions:

1. Place ground chuck in a 2-gallon stockpot and brown over medium heat. Remove meat and drain well. Wipe drippings from pot.
2. Return meat to stockpot; add tomatoes and water. Bring to a simmer and cook, covered, until tomatoes are soft and a juicy broth is created, about 20 minutes.
3. Add remaining ingredients, cover, and continue to simmer 60 additional minutes to allow flavors to build.

Nutrient analysis: *Per 1 1/2 –cup serving – 172 calories; 1.5g total fat (.7g sat fat); 30g carbohydrate (6g dietary fiber); 10g protein; 15mg cholesterol; 195mg sodium.*

Creamless Creamy Tomato Soup (Serves 6)

Creamy tomato soup made with heavy cream can easily weigh in at 410 calories and 24g of fat per serving. See if you don't agree that the smart substitutions in this recipe deliver a super tasty and totally creamy soup for less than half those heavy stats.

Ingredients:

1/4 cup extra-virgin olive oil
1 onion, minced
3 garlic cloves, minced
Pinch of red pepper flakes
1 bay leaf
2 (28-ounce) cans whole peeled tomatoes
1 tablespoon light or dark brown sugar
3 slices high-quality white sandwich bread, crusts removed, torn into 1-inch pieces
2 cups low-sodium chicken broth
2 tablespoons brandy, optional
Salt and pepper
1/4 cup minced fresh chives

Directions:

1. Heat 2 tablespoons of the oil in a large Dutch oven over medium heat until shimmering. Add the onion, garlic, red pepper flakes and bay leaf and cook until onion is softened, about 5 minutes.
2. Stir in the tomatoes with their juice. Using a potato masher, mash the tomatoes until no pieces are larger than 2-inches. Stir in the sugar and bread; bring to a simmer and cook until bread begins to dissolve, about 5 minutes.
3. Discard the bay leaf. Puree the soup with the remaining 2 tablespoons oil in a blender, in batches, until smooth. Return the soup to a clean pot, stir in the broth and brandy, and cook gently over medium-low heat until soup is hot.
4. Season with salt and pepper. Sprinkle individual bowls with minced chives before serving.

Nutrient analysis: *Per 1 1/2 cup serving – 180 calories; 10g total fat (1.5g sat. fat); 0g cholesterol.*

Pan Seared Top Sirloin Steak with Bell Pepper-Balsamic Vinegar Sauce (Serves 4)

Fast enough for week night, but impressive enough for company or any special occasion meal.

Ingredients:

2 (12-ounce) boneless top sirloin steaks, 1-inch thick, trimmed of all visible fat
Salt and pepper
2 teaspoons canola oil

Directions:

1. Pat steaks dry with paper towels and season with salt and pepper.
2. Heat the oil in a 12-inch skillet over medium-high heat until just smoking.
3. Brown the steaks well on the first side, 3 to 5 minutes.
4. Flip steaks over, reduce heat to medium, and continue to cook until meat registers 125 degrees (medium-rare), 135 degrees (medium), or 155 degrees (well-done) on an instant read

thermometer; about 5 to 10 minutes longer, reducing heat if pan begins to scorch.

5. Transfer steaks to a carving board, tent loosely with foil, and let rest for 5 minutes. Prepare sauce while steaks rest.

6. Slice steaks thin against the grain and serve with sauce.

Nutrient analysis: *Per serving – 248 calories; 9g total fat (2.5g sat. fat); 70 mg cholesterol; 0g carbohydrate; 38g protein; 0g fiber; 240mg sodium.*

Bell Pepper-Balsamic Vinegar Sauce (Makes about 1 1/2 cups)

Ingredients:

2 teaspoons canola oil
1 red bell pepper, stemmed, seeded and sliced thin
1 small red onion, halved and sliced thin
2 garlic cloves, minced
1 teaspoon minced fresh thyme, or 1/4 teaspoon dried
1 cup low-sodium chicken brot
1 tablespoon balsamic vinegar
Salt and pepper

Directions:

1. Add the oil to the same skillet the steaks were cooked in and return to medium-high heat until shimmering. Add the bell pepper and onion and cook until softened, 5 to 7 minutes.
2. Stir in garlic and thyme and cook until fragrant, about 30 seconds.
3. Stir in the broth and any accumulated juices from the resting steaks, scraping up any browned bits on the bottom of the pan. Simmer until the sauce has thickened, about 6 minutes. 4. Remove skillet from burner, stir in the vinegar, season with salt and pepper to taste, and serve.

Nutrient analysis: *Per 6 tablespoon serving – 45 calories; 2.5g total fat (0g sat. fat); 0mg cholesterol; 4g carbohydrate; 1g protein; 1g fiber; 150mg sodium.*

Creamy Mashed Potatoes (Serves 6)

Even mashed potatoes can be part of the “dieters menu” when you choose fats wisely. Typical mashes, loaded with butter and full-fat cream, can cost 280 calories and nearly 20 grams of fat per serving, or more. This 180 calorie version, made with a respectable 2 tablespoons butter, 2 percent milk and low-fat sour cream is every bit as satisfying and tastes terrific.

Do not substitute 1 percent or skim milk, or potatoes will taste overly lean.

Ingredients:

2 pounds russet potatoes (about 4 medium), peeled and sliced 1/2-inch thick
Salt and pepper
1/2 cup 2 percent low-fat milk, warmed
1/3 cup low-fat sour cream, room temperature
2 tablespoons unsalted butter, melted

Directions:

1. Place potatoes and 1 tablespoon salt in a large saucepan, add enough water to cover potatoes by 1-inch and bring to boil over high heat. Reduce heat to medium-low and simmer gently until potatoes are tender but not falling apart, about 15 minutes.
2. Drain potatoes and return to the saucepan set on the still-hot burner. Using a potato masher, mash potatoes just until a few small lumps remain.
3. Fold in the warmed milk, room temperature sour cream and melted butter until just incorporated. Season with salt and pepper to taste and serve.

Nutrient analysis: *Per 2/3 cup serving – 180 calories; 5g total fat (3g sat. fat); 10mg cholesterol; 30g carbohydrate (2g dietary fiber); 115mg sodium.*

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