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National Nutrition Month: Tips for Building Better Salads

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As part of National Nutrition Month this March, we'll look at a variety of components that make up a healthy salad. To start, remember that food that is good for you doesn't have to be boring! Making a salad is an opportunity to incorporate many nutrients into one meal, so be sure to consider the following options.

Leafy Greens

- *Iceberg, Romaine, mixed greens, arugula, spinach, and kale*

This is the base of the salad. Iceberg lettuce is a good choice if you like a good crunch, but leafy greens in general are good sources of fiber, vitamins, and minerals. Lettuces often provide Vitamins A, C, and K and folate. To learn more, visit lettuceinfo.org and click on the "Lettuce Nutrition" link at the top of the page.

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What's Happening this Month:

- * Make sure to download the Baritastic app and join using our Capital Health code (76777). Use the app to log your food and get recommendations from your dietitian, be reminded of program events and updates, and access recipes!
- * Our Bariatric Support Group for post-weight loss surgery patients is Tuesday March 28 from 6–7 p.m. All support groups are held virtually, so please check our online support group or your email (check junk mail!) for the link to access, or message your dietitian to receive the link.
- * If you had surgery and are not a member of our Post-Op Online Support Group, the Capital Health D.R.E.A.M. Team, please send an email to clazur@capitalhealth.org so Caroline can send you the link and accept your request. This is a great way to obtain support from our program and other post-op patients in our program, 24/7!
- * Are you or someone in your life thinking about weight loss surgery? Schedule a virtual information session with our Bariatric Surgeon Dr. Chung on Tuesday March 7, from 7–8:30 p.m. To register, visit capitalhealth.org/weightloss or call our office to speak to Brelynn, our coordinator, at 609.537.6777.
- * For individuals interested in weight loss without surgery, or for bariatric patients experiencing weight regain, try our Medical Weight Loss Program! This program features Robard's great tasting New Direction Products! Weekly visits with our dietitians help you develop an individualized plan and lifestyle skills to help you lose weight and keep it off! To get started, call our office at 609.537.6777 to schedule your screening with Dr. Anwar.



NATIONAL NUTRITION MONTH: TIPS FOR BUILDING BETTER SALADS *continued*



Protein

■ *Chicken, salmon, hard-boiled eggs, tuna salad, chicken salad, egg salad, shrimp, tuna, and ground turkey*

If you're making a salad your main meal, always try to include a protein. Add variety by changing up the type of protein you choose or how you season it—think barbecued, blackened, or buffalo style! A good serving size for protein is about 4 to 5 ounces (roughly the size of the palm of your hand). For vegetarian protein options, try tofu, veggie burger, falafel, or soy-based protein such as soy bacon or meatless crumbles.

Foods like nuts, cheeses, or beans will also add to the protein content of your salad.

Toppings

■ *Healthy fats found in foods like almonds, walnuts, cashews, pistachios, pecans, and avocado*

These are great choices for adding healthy monounsaturated fats to your salad. Monounsaturated fats support heart health by promoting healthy cholesterol levels. Avocados are also a great source of soluble fiber. Whatever option you choose, be careful with portion sizes because the calories can add up quickly in this category. For avocado, add about one quarter to one half of an avocado. For nuts, use about 1–2 tablespoons (if chopped) or 6–10 individual nuts.

■ *Dried cranberries, raisins, apple slices, pears, peaches, watermelon, pomegranate seeds, strawberries, blueberries, mangos, oranges, and apricots.*

Adding fruit is a great way to enjoy a mix of savory and sweet in your salad. With spring on the horizon, we can look forward to a variety of fruits to be in season soon. Check out pickyourown.org to see when you can expect your favorites. One major benefit of fruits is soluble fiber, which helps to lower the LDL (or “bad”) cholesterol. Berries are also high in antioxidants, which help reduce inflammation. When buying dried fruit, check the label for no added sugars. Added sugars are the sugar that is not natural to the fruit.



■ *Feta, parmesan, goat, mozzarella, and blue cheese*

Cheese can be a good way to get some extra protein and flavor into your salad. Opt for low-fat versions whenever possible.

■ *Beans, chickpeas, and other legumes*

Legumes are high in fiber and contain protein, which helps us to feel fuller for longer and gives us lasting energy. Fiber is also good for preventing constipation. Our daily fiber needs are about 25 grams per day. Beans options include red beans, white beans, black beans, and edamame beans.

Air frying chickpeas is a great way to add crunch to a salad. Start with chick peas that are rinsed and dried, then air fry them at 380 degrees for 12–14 minutes (or until golden brown). Sprinkle olive oil over them and add the seasoning after they are done cooking. Try using Cajun seasoning, garlic powder, curry powder, or ranch seasoning, to name a few.

■ *Corn, tomatoes, cucumber, onion, bell peppers, radishes, carrots, beets, broccoli, and other vegetables*

There are many great options for adding vegetables to your salad. Along with adding color, vegetables also help to make the salad more filling and contain fiber and beneficial micronutrients such as vitamin C and vitamin A. Some of our favorites, like asparagus and spinach, will be in season in March and April. You can even mix leftover cooked vegetables in your salad as another way to add variety.

NATIONAL NUTRITION MONTH: TIPS FOR BUILDING BETTER SALADS *continued*



Dressing

- *Make your own, balsamic vinaigrette, olive oil and vinegar*

If you like creamy dressings, look for alternatives in the store such as yogurt dressings, and light versions.

It is also good to be careful with the portion of dressing. Creamy dressings are higher in fat, so go with a lighter version for fewer calories.

Order a Salad When Dining Out

When ordering a salad at a restaurant, you may sometimes be surprised to see a calorie count that is as high as a meal you might consider unhealthy (such as a cheeseburger). Salads at restaurants can add up to over 1,000 calories, but there are strategies for staying on a healthier track.

- Cut your portion in half and ask for a take-out container for the other half at the beginning of the meal.
- Ask for the dressing on the side and opt for vinaigrettes.
- Limit ingredients that add calories to salads, such as bacon, avocado, creamy dressings, mayonnaise (if chicken or tuna salad present), and nuts.



Other Ways to Incorporate Salads into Meals

- Have a salad as an appetizer. This can help with appetite control and the main meal.
- Use a salad to balance your meal. For example, if you are having pizza for dinner, having a salad on the side adds healthy foods to your meal and helps control your portions of pizza.

Products of the Month



Vegetable Chopper, Onion Chopper, Mandolin Slicer

This 10-piece set makes salad prep easier and faster. Available on Amazon for around \$20.



Checkered Chef Mezzaluna Knife and Chopper

Using an effortless rocking motion, you'll make perfectly chopped salads in no time! Available on Amazon for around \$15.

RECIPES OF THE MONTH



TUNA POKE SALAD

Prep Time: 15 minutes

NUTRITION INFO – PER SERVING

Makes 1 serving

404 CALORIES ▪ 16g CARBS ▪ 36g PROTEIN
23g FAT ▪ 4g SATURATED FAT
43mg CHOLESTEROL ▪ 1211.5mg SODIUM
7.5g FIBER ▪ 3.5g SUGAR

Image and recipe adapted from skinnytaste.com

INGREDIENTS

Tuna

- ½ pound sushi grade tuna, cut into half-inch cubes
- ¼ cup sliced scallions, plus more for garnish
- 2 tbsp reduced-sodium soy sauce or gluten-free tamari
- 1 tsp sesame oil
- ½ tsp sriracha

Soy-Wasabi Vinaigrette

- 1 tbsp reduced-sodium soy sauce or gluten-free tamari
- 1 tsp wasabi, in tube
- 2 tbsp rice wine vinegar
- ½ tbsp sesame oil

Salad

- 3 cups baby greens, arugula, or your favorite lettuce
- 1 cup Persian cucumbers peeled and diced into half-inch cubes (from about 2 whole cucumbers)
- 1 small Hass avocado (about 4 oz.), sliced
- ½ cup shelled edamame
- Furikake, for topping (such as Eden Shake)

DIRECTIONS

1. Combine the vinaigrette ingredients in a small bowl and set aside.
2. In a medium bowl, combine tuna with scallions, soy sauce, sesame oil and sriracha. Gently toss to combine and set aside while you prepare the salad.
3. In two bowls, layer the salad greens, half of the tuna, edamame, avocado, cucumber and drizzle with soy-wasabi vinaigrette.
4. Top with furikake and scallions, for garnish.



TACO SALAD MEAL PREP

Prep Time: 10 minutes ▪ Cook Time: 20 minutes

NUTRITION INFO – PER SERVING

Makes 4 servings

313 CALORIES ▪ 13g CARBS ▪ 28.5g PROTEIN
17.5g FAT ▪ 5.5g SATURATED FAT
92.5mg CHOLESTEROL ▪ 917.5mg SODIUM
4g FIBER ▪ 5.5g SUGAR

Image and recipe adapted from skinnytaste.com

INGREDIENTS

Dressing

- ½ cup jarred mild salsa
- 4 tsp extra virgin olive oil
- juice of ½ lime

Meat

- 1 lb. 93% lean ground turkey
- 1 tsp garlic powder
- 1 tsp cumin
- 1 tsp kosher salt
- ½ tsp chili powder
- ½ tsp paprika
- ½ tsp oregano
- ½ small onion, minced
- 2 tbsp bell pepper, minced
- ½ cup water
- 4 oz. canned tomato sauce (about ½ can)

Salad

- 6 cups chopped Romaine lettuce
- 1 cup pico de gallo
- ½ cup shredded cheddar
- 4 lime wedges, for serving
- optional Greek yogurt or sour cream

DIRECTIONS

1. Brown the turkey in a large skillet, breaking it into smaller pieces as it cooks.
2. When no longer pink, add dry seasoning and mix well.
3. Add the onion, pepper, water, and tomato sauce and cover.
4. Simmer on low for about 20 minutes.
5. Meanwhile, while the meat is cooking, make the dressing by combining the salsa, olive oil and lime juice. Transfer to four small containers.
6. Divide the meat equally between the four meal prep containers.
7. Divide the lettuce in four sealable storage baggies.
8. Divide pico de gallo, sour cream or yogurt (if using), and cheese in small containers. Cover and refrigerate.
9. To serve, remove everything but the meat from the meal prep container, then warm the meat in the microwave.
10. Assemble the salad by placing the lettuce in a bowl or plate and top with the meat, pico de gallo, cheese. Finish with dressing.