

Fresh Produce: What do I do with it?

Tips and Recipes by Dina Aronson, MS, RD, LDN, Registered Dietitian
NutraWiz Nutrition Medford, MA www.nutrawiz.com 781-391-6444

All health experts agree: Americans should be eating more fruits and vegetables. All of us should be eating at LEAST five servings of produce per day, but more is better: According to the National Cancer Institute, we should be striving for at least nine servings of fruits and vegetables per day. This may seem like a lot until you consider that a "serving" of fruit is the size of a tennis ball and a "serving" of vegetables is only ½ cup (or 1 cup raw leafy veggies). So a grapefruit would be two servings, and a big salad may be as many as four or more. If all Americans ate just five servings of fruits and vegetables each day, there would be 30% fewer strokes, 20% less cancer, and 15% less heart disease. One of the barriers to eating at least five a day is that most people are used to preparing and eating fruits and vegetables only certain ways. Being creatures of habit, this can get a little boring. So why not learn a few new ways to get your (at least) five a day? The recipes below are good for you, delicious, and easy to prepare.

Healthy Tips



- ▶ It isn't necessary to eat only fresh fruits and vegetables. Frozen produce is just as good, and canned produce is OK as long as you select products without added sugar.
- ▶ Save money on produce by shopping at farmer's markets, buying in season, buying on sale, or by growing your own!
- ▶ Is organic better? Sometimes it is. But whether produce is organic is not as important as getting plenty of fruits and vegetables. The health benefits of produce outweigh any risks of eating conventional produce. Whatever type of fresh produce you buy or grow, always wash your fruits and vegetables thoroughly.

- ▶ "Sneak" extra vegetables into your soups, sauces, stews, chilis, stir-fries, salads, and sandwiches.
- ▶ Keep cut-up, ready-to-munch apple slices, baby carrots, bell pepper strips, celery stalks, cucumber rounds, and other produce in containers or plastic bags in the fridge to prepare for a snack attack. Dip veggies in bean dip or hummus for a healthy protein boost.
- ▶ Freeze extra berries and bananas for frozen smoothies, and freeze extra (blanched or lightly steamed) vegetables for future use in soups or stews.

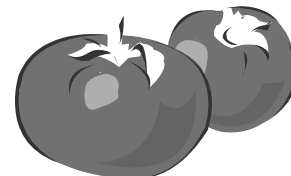


Healthy Recipes

Wow, is this GOOD Salad

2-3 pounds ripe red tomatoes, diced
1 green pepper, diced
1 red pepper, diced
1 red onion, diced
1 can of beans of your choice, rinsed

1 bunch flat parsley, chopped
juice of 1 lemon (about ¼ cup)
salt and pepper to taste
2 tablespoons olive oil
splash of white wine (optional)



Combine all ingredients in a big bowl. Chill and serve. For a pretty presentation, serve over large dark green lettuce leaves. Goes very well with whole grain bread. This is a perfect picnic dish, and lasts in the refrigerator for several days. Makes 4 servings as a main dish, 6-8 as a side dish.

Variations:

- Use your favorite salad dressing in place of the lemon and olive oil.
- For a Mexican flair, substitute fresh chopped cilantro for the parsley, lime juice for the lemon juice, and opt for black beans.
- Spoon the salad into a tortilla, roll up, and enjoy as a wrap.

(Healthy recipes continued on other side)

Fruit and Soy Smoothies

These smoothies are made with soy milk, which is a nutritious alternative to cow's milk because soy milk has heart-healthy soy protein, low levels of or zero saturated fat, and no cholesterol. It is also lactose free (many people cannot digest lactose found in cow's milk) and has just as much calcium as cow's milk. You can find soy milk in most grocery stores in the dairy section.



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| 1 frozen banana (peel, then freeze for at least 1 day) | 1-2 cups vanilla soy milk |
| 1 cup fresh or frozen berries of your choice | dash of cinnamon |

Combine all ingredients in a blender (add the soy milk gradually). For a thick smoothie, use 1 cup or so of soy milk, and for a thinner consistency, add more soy milk. Makes 2 servings.

Variations:

- Use non-frozen fruit and add 2 large ice cubes before blending.

Quickie Ratatouille

This dish is super-easy to prepare and is extremely low in calories.

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| 1 large eggplant, peeled and diced into 1-inch cubes | 1 Tablespoon chopped or minced garlic |
| 1 zucchini, diced into 1-inch cubes | 1 28-oz can diced tomatoes or 3 pounds fresh ripe tomatoes, diced |
| Nonstick cooking spray | 1 Tablespoon each dried basil, parsley, and oregano |
| 1 onion, chopped | salt and pepper to taste |
| 1 green and 1 yellow bell pepper, chopped | |

Steam the eggplant and zucchini chunks until tender. Meanwhile, spray the bottom of a large pot with a little nonstick cooking spray and sauté the onion, peppers, and garlic until softened. Add the eggplant and zucchini, then the tomatoes and seasonings. Cook for about 10 minutes on low heat, stirring occasionally. If mixture gets dry, add some red wine, water, tomato juice, or vegetable broth. Serve over brown rice or millet. Makes 4 servings.

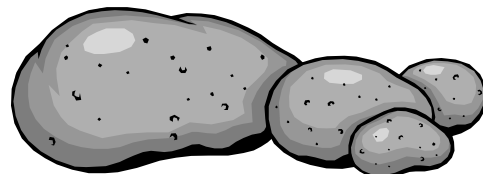
Variation:

- For a main dish, add a can of large white beans (rinsed) at the end of cooking.

Roasted Potatoes

Change the seasonings of this side dish to complement the rest of your meal.

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| 3 pounds potatoes |
| 1 Tablespoon olive oil OR nonstick cooking spray |
| spice blend of your choice (BAM! seasoning, Mrs. Dash, seasoned salt, etc.) |



Scrub the potatoes and cut away any bad spots. Slice into 2-inch cubes. Toss the potatoes in oil or spray lightly with nonstick cooking spray, and add the spices. Toss again until evenly coated. Roast at 450 degrees for 30 minutes, or until potatoes are tender. Makes 6 servings (side dish).

Variation:

- Use sweet potatoes in place of regular potatoes. You may need to increase the cooking time.

Stuffed Acorn or Butternut Squash

In the late fall and winter, when fresh fruits are rather scarce, colorful, sweet, nutritious squash saves the day.

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| 2 acorn or butternut squash | 2 tablespoons maple syrup |
| 1 large apple, chopped | 2 tablespoons orange juice |
| ½ cup raisins | 1 teaspoon cinnamon |
| ½ cup walnuts, chopped | ½ teaspoon nutmeg |

Cut the squashes in half and scoop out the seeds. Bake, cut side down, at 350 degrees for 40-50 minutes, until squash is soft. Scoop some, but not all, of the squash out (make a nice cavity in each half) and mash with the remaining ingredients. Fill each squash cavity with ¼ of the mixture. Cover with foil and bake an additional 10 minutes. Serves 4.

