

Try these tips for making your diet healthier



By Kathleen Alaks
of the Daily Courier

Turning the calendar to a new year inspires many people to adopt a healthier diet.

Cheryl Kirk, a registered dietician with the Oregon State University Extension Service in Josephine County, has these suggestions for getting off to a more healthful 2017:

- Fill at least half of your plate (or bowl) with fruits and veggies.

“These contain many beneficial vitamins, nutrients and fiber and are generally low in calories and can curb the desire for decadent sweets.”

- Go for whole grains. “The fiber in these provides more satiety than refined carbohydrates,” Kirk says.

Great choices are whole grain rice blends, oatmeal, whole grain breads, cooked wheat berries, quinoa, polenta and corn tortillas.

- Choose lean meats, fish and poultry and aim for several meatless meals or meatless days each week.

Include vegetable sources of protein, such as beans, legumes, nuts, seeds and tofu in place of animal-based proteins.

- Keep your cupboards and fridge stocked with staples, such as canned and dried beans, potatoes, carrots, celery, apples, oranges, winter squash, cabbage, nuts, peanut butter, pasta, rice and canned tomato products.

“These all have a long shelf life and are handy to create quick meals and resist the urge for fast food,” Kirk says.

- Likewise, reduce food waste by using highly perishable foods — mushrooms, tomatoes, berries, bananas, lettuce — soon after purchase.

“Planning meals creates a sense of con-

nection to what we eat and how we live, which can be a strong motivation for maintaining a healthy eating style.”

- Eat breakfast. People who make breakfast a routine part of each day generally take in fewer calories overall throughout the day.

“This doesn’t mean three eggs and a rasher of bacon,” Kirk warns.

Try whole grain oatmeal topped with nuts and dried fruit or toast and peanut butter or a one-egg omelet (or try one whole egg plus one egg white) or a fruit smoothie enhanced with protein from Greek yogurt, nuts or nut butter.

- Don’t skip meals. Aim for moderate-sized, balanced meals with a source of protein, carbohydrate and small amount of fat at each meal.

“This will stabilize blood sugars and help keep hunger in check throughout the day,” Kirk says.

- Balance the calories you eat with what you expend. “If you are aiming for weight loss, you’ll actually need to reduce calories below what you need for maintenance and activity to trim down,” she says. “Steer clear of extra calories found in sugary drinks, mega mochas and excess alcohol.”

- Be active. Find physical activities that are fun and interesting to you and if you have a friend to join you, all the better.

- Be adventuresome. Try a new vegetable, new whole grain or a different type of green such as kale or bok choy.

Visit the indoor growers market for local winter vegetables. Find healthy, low-cost, quick-to-fix recipes at the Oregon State University Food Hero site, www.food-hero.org.

- Finally, stay positive and mindful.

“Give yourself a pat on the back for any positive efforts you are making toward a healthier lifestyle in 2017.”

Photo by FOOD HERO WITH OSU EXTENSION SERVICE

Left, Kale and White Bean Soup is simple, hearty and ready to serve in just 30 minutes. Above, Baked Berry Oatmeal can be served as breakfast or dessert.

Baked Berry Oatmeal

2 cups old fashioned rolled oats
1 teaspoon baking powder
1 teaspoon cinnamon
1/4 teaspoon salt
2 eggs
1/2 cup brown sugar
1 1/2 teaspoons vanilla
2 cups nonfat or 1 percent milk

Preheat oven to 375 degrees. In a medium bowl, mix together the oats, baking powder, cinnamon and salt.

In a separate bowl, beat the eggs until blended; Stir in brown sugar, vanilla, milk and melted butter. Pour wet ingredients into the dry ingredients and stir until well combined.

Add the berries and stir lightly to evenly distribute. Pour mixture into 2 quart baking dish. Sprinkle with chopped nuts, if desired. Bake for 20-30 minutes or until the top is golden brown. Makes 6 servings.

4 teaspoons butter or margarine, melted
2 cups cane berries, fresh or frozen (raspberries, blackberries, marionberries)
1/4 cup walnuts, chopped (optional)

Kale and White Bean Soup

1 cup onion, chopped
4 cloves garlic, minced, or 1 teaspoon garlic powder
1 tablespoon butter or margarine
2 cups broth (chicken or vegetable)
1 1/2 cups cooked white beans or 1 15.5-ounce can, drained and rinsed

In a saucepan over medium-high heat, sauté onion and garlic in butter or margarine until soft.

Add broth, white beans and tomatoes; stir to combine. Bring to a boil, reduce heat, cover, and simmer for about 5 minutes. Add the kale and Italian seasoning. Simmer until kale has softened, 3 to 5 minutes. Serve warm. Makes 5 cups.

1 3/4 cups diced tomatoes, or 1 14.5-ounce can, with juice
1 tablespoon Italian seasoning
3 cups kale, chopped (fresh or frozen)

Carrot, Jicama and Orange Salad

3 cups jicama, peeled and cut into small pieces (about 1 small jicama)
1 cup carrots, peeled and coarsely grated (about 2 medium carrots)
2 cups oranges, peeled and cut into small pieces (about 2 small oranges)

In a medium bowl, mix jicama, carrots and oranges. In a small bowl, combine oil, orange juice, honey, lime juice and salt. Mix well.

Pour over the salad and stir lightly. Serve immediately. Makes 8 servings.

2 teaspoons oil
2 tablespoons orange juice
1 tablespoon honey
2 teaspoons lime juice
1/4 teaspoon salt

Don't ignore the trends: Kale is a worthy food

In the new year, many food writers like to discuss the latest trends or what's hot and what's not. And lately, I've been seeing too many articles saying that kale, that crinkly, earthy, slightly bitter, and highly nutritious dark green has already enjoyed its moment in the culinary sun; that it should start disappearing from our menus and tables, especially in salads.



Baby kale leaves are tender and mild, perfect for a winter salad.



Wolfgang Puck's Kitchen
Wolfgang Puck
Food columnist

I think that banishing kale is a terrible idea. Yes, it's hard to find a restaurant menu or supermarket produce shelf today that doesn't feature kale. But the fact that it's everywhere should no more be a reason for us to start ignoring kale than, say, deciding that we won't eat chicken or pasta because everybody is serving those ingredients.

I myself love the flavor and texture of kale; and as someone who tries every day to make smart food choices, I don't want to stop eating such a generous source of not only dietary fiber and vitamins, but also micronutrients that research has found can play a role in helping to prevent so many illnesses.

As I see it, the trouble with kale is that too many people don't know the right way to shop for and prepare it. Many people find the leaves too tough or bitter. That's why you should not only look for tenderer, milder-tasting baby kale leaves, but also take care to remove any tough stems or veins or ribs from them. And, as you'll learn in the following recipe for one of my favorite kale salads, it also makes sense to complement the flavor of the leaves with a

tangy-sweet dressing like the mixture I prefer of cider vinegar, honey, olive oil and a touch of walnut oil.

Finally, I add to the kale other complementary flavors, textures and colors — pale leaves of curly endive and beautiful purple-and-white radicchio, matchsticks of apple, shavings of Parmesan cheese, and candied walnuts that are so easy and delicious that you'll want to make batches of them regularly.

The result is a salad that looks as beautiful as it tastes delicious and fresh. I think you'll feel happy to serve it as a first course.

You can certainly vary it too — maybe crumbling in some blue cheese or feta in place of the Parmesan shavings, or candying a different kind of nut such as pecans or hazelnut pieces. If you like, you could top it with grilled or broiled seafood or chicken for a main-dish salad.

BABY KALE SALAD WITH APPLES, PARMESAN AND CANDIED WALNUTS
SERVES 4
For candied walnuts:
1 egg white
1 cup coarsely chopped raw shelled walnuts

1/4 cup granulated sugar
1/4 teaspoon ground cinnamon

1/4 teaspoon cayenne pepper
For Cider-Honey Dressing:
2 tablespoons cider vinegar
1 tablespoon honey, plus more as needed
Kosher salt
Freshly ground black pepper

1/4 cup extra-virgin olive oil
1 tablespoon walnut oil
For Baby Kale Salad:
6 cups baby kale leaves, stemmed, any tough veins or ribs removed, larger leaves torn into bite-sized pieces

1 head curly endive, stemmed, leaves torn into bite-sized pieces

6 leaves radicchio, cut crosswise into 1/2-inch ribbons
1/2 lemon
1 apple, peeled, cored, sliced and cut into matchstick-sized strips

2 ounces Parmesan cheese, cut into shavings with a vegetable peeler

First, prepare the walnuts. Preheat the oven to 450 F. In a medium bowl, whisk the egg white until foamy. Put the walnuts in a large bowl, add 1 tablespoon of the egg whites, and sprinkle in the sugar, cinnamon and cayenne. Stir to coat the

walnuts. Spread the nuts on a parchment-lined baking sheet. Bake until golden brown, 5 to 10 minutes. Cool the nuts to room temperature, then gently separate them. Set aside.

For the dressing, put the vinegar and honey in a bowl and whisk until blended. Season to taste with salt and pepper. Whisking continuously, slowly pour in the olive and walnut oils. Taste and, if necessary, stir in a little more honey.

In a large mixing bowl, com-

bine the kale, curly endive and radicchio. In a separate bowl, squeeze just enough of the lemon over the apple pieces to coat them, and toss thoroughly. Add the apples to the salad and toss well. Add just enough of the vinaigrette to coat the ingredients and toss again. Season to taste with salt and pepper.

Mound the salad mixture on chilled serving plates. Scatter the walnuts evenly over and around the salad. Top with Parmesan shavings.

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