"No Sweat" Meals For Summer

**Summer** is a great time to look for ways to reduce the time you spend in the kitchen preparing meals. It doesn't take any more time to prepare healthy meals than it does to prepare unhealthy ones. This newsletter provides some great ideas for simple summer meals that require little or NO cooking!

**Quick Meal Ideas**

**Mediterranean Pasta Salad:** Do you have some leftover pasta like low-fat tortellini or ravioli in your refrigerator? Consider mixing 1/2 cup of pasta with 1/2 cup of your favorite raw vegetables, such as diced tomatoes, sliced mushrooms or some canned and rinsed water-packed artichoke hearts. Toss the mixture with your favorite fat-free Italian dressing or flavored vinegar. Garnish with fresh chopped oregano and basil (to taste) and sprinkle on about 1 tablespoon of canned Parmesan cheese, if desired. Each cup provides about 5 grams of fat, 1 F/V serving and 1 Grain serving.

**Curried Chicken Salad Sandwich:** How about creating a quick, light and delicious sandwich using some leftover cooked chicken or turkey breast? Stir low-fat or fat-free mayonnaise into 1/2 cup diced or shredded chicken or turkey. Add 1/2 cup raw, chopped fruits and vegetables, such as grapes or apples, chopped celery, and red bell pepper. Flavor the mixture with curry powder, to taste. Serve on whole grain bread with fresh spinach leaves and tomato slices. Each 1/2 cup of salad mixture provides about 3 grams of fat and 1/2 F/V serving if made with low-fat mayo (1 gram of fat, if fat-free mayo).

**Wrap-up Your Meal!** A wrap is a type of sandwich made by using a flour tortilla. You can fill a tortilla with a variety of different low-fat combinations, then roll it up, closing one end. Consider this suggestion for a Crunchy Vegetable Wrap: 1 (10-inch) fat-free flour tortilla, 1 tablespoon tub-style fat-free cream cheese, 1 curly lettuce leaf, 1/2 cup sliced red cabbage, 2 tablespoons chopped tomato, 1 tablespoon crumbled blue cheese (if desired) and 1/2 tablespoon finely diced red onion. Spread cream cheese over the tortilla and top with lettuce leaf. Add remaining ingredients; roll up. Cut in half, diagonally. This wrap contains about 2 grams of fat with blue cheese (0 grams of fat without blue cheese) and provides about 1 F/V serving and 2 Grain servings.

**Fruit-Filled Salad:** Mix together 1/2 cup pineapple chunks or blueberries and fat-free cottage cheese, or yogurt. Drizzle mixture with honey and sprinkle with cinnamon, if desired. Each serving provides 1 F/V.

**Garden Gazpacho:** Here's a great idea for a cool soup flavored with hot peppers. Combine the following ingredients, cover and chill at least 2 hours: 2 large tomatoes, peeled, cored and coarsely chopped, 3 medium carrots, cooked and sliced, 1 large cucumber, peeled, seeded and coarsely chopped, 1 red or green bell pepper, chopped, 1 medium onion, chopped, 3 cups tomato juice, 1/3 cup red wine vinegar, 1 tablespoon olive oil, 1/4 teaspoon hot pepper sauce, 2-3 garlic cloves, minced, 1 tablespoon fresh basil (or 1 teaspoon dried) and black pepper, to taste. Makes 4 servings; each serving provides about 3 grams of fat and 2 F/V servings.

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Minneapolis Participant Cruises Through Her Dietary Goals

Whoever said, “The world is your classroom,” must have seen Mary Kenney’s résumé. Mary and her husband, Jim, teach computer classes while sailing on cruise ships to such exotic locales as Asia, Australia, New Zealand, the Caribbean, Europe, the Mexican Riviera, Scandinavia and South America.

One could hardly imagine a more challenging environment for a WHI Dietary Change participant than a luxurious ocean liner, with midnight buffets, pastry carts, and rich, gourmet cuisine. But Mary, despite being at sea up to 20 weeks each year, has managed to stick with her dietary goals and actually finds the task easiest on board. “It was a total surprise to find out how easy it was...we usually do the buffet at breakfast and I might have six servings of fruit at breakfast alone,” she says. “The low-fat and vegetarian dinner choices are terrific and they give you a medium-sized portion.”

Lunch is usually a garden burger and more fruit and vegetables by the pool. “I skip the fries and desserts,” Mary explains. “They have open buffets on the deck and they are nice, but that’s where you can get tempted. So I just stay away from those and it works better.” Mary admits that her motivation for eating healthy, besides her WHI goals, is to fit into her evening gowns.

Mary and Jim, married 45 years, are officially retired. “But retirement is just as busy, if not more, than our ‘other’ life,” she notes. When they heard of an opportunity to teach classes through Computer University@Sea, a program on Crystal Cruises, they jumped at the chance. Mary didn’t have a lot of computer experience, having spent a varied career doing everything from being a flight attendant to selling real estate. “It was a little frightening at first,” the 66-year-old recalls. “But I realized it was sort of like teaching children...they’re beginners and they don’t want any geek talk.” She added, “The funniest line I’ve heard was a woman saying she didn’t think she could ever learn the computer, as she was still working on electric blankets!”

Slowly and patiently, Mary teaches basic computer skills, ranging from how to use e-mail to preparing financial spreadsheets and using the Internet.

“My favorite part is seeing the happiness when people receive their first e-mail,” she says. “The classes are very popular because it’s sort of a niche that people our age missed. We’ve heard from some of our students about how they got a computer when they arrived back home and they enjoy staying in touch with family now.”

When they’re not in the computer lab, Mary and Jim enjoy the cruises like the other passengers. “We get to see the world—we’re being kids again,” she explains. “This has been a great experience for us, at this time in our lives, to be able to work together and just go off to this wonderful, out-of-reality life. We are very blessed.”

Back home in St. Paul, Minnesota, reality hits. “It’s hard to come back and do housework and have nobody change your towels and leave a chocolate on your bed,” Mary says with a laugh. “It’s also harder to watch what you eat when you have all the temptations right at hand.” On the positive side, being home means Mary and Jim can spend plenty of time with their daughters and three grandchildren. Mary enjoys volunteering at a crisis nursery every week. Her spare-time activities also revolve around the nursery: recruiting volunteers, hunting for toys at garage sales and sewing bibs and washcloths.

Mary counts WHI as one of the many blessings in her life. “My girls are so glad that it keeps me seeing the doctor as often as it does. I don’t think I’ll ever go back to eating the food I once did,” she concludes. “I feel better physically and I understand more what the body needs.”
Roast Beef and Blue Cheese Salad

8 cups (16 ounces) packed European-style mixed salad greens
8 ounces thinly sliced, well-trimmed deli roast beef
20 (2 pints) cherry tomatoes
1/4 cup (1 ounce) crumbled blue cheese
1/3 cup fat-free raspberry vinaigrette

Arrange salad greens evenly on each of 4 plates.

Divide roast beef slices into 2 stacks; roll each stack, jellyroll fashion, and cut crosswise into 1-inch slices.

Arrange beef, tomatoes, and cheese over greens. Drizzle evenly with vinaigrette.

Makes 4 servings.

Fat: 5 grams/serving

Fruit/Vegetable Servings: 2 per serving

Recipe from Cooking Light 5-Ingredient 15-Minute Cookbook
Summer Squash Sauté Over Polenta

Garlic-flavored cooking spray
1 package (16-ounce) sun-dried tomato-flavored polenta, cut into 12 slices
2 tablespoons pesto
2 tablespoons water
2 cups sliced yellow squash
2 cups sliced zucchini
1 jar (7-ounce) roasted red peppers, drained and cut into strips
1/2 cup (2 ounces) shredded fresh Parmesan cheese

Place polenta slices on a baking sheet coated with cooking spray. Broil 3-1/2 inches from heat 5 minutes on each side or until lightly browned. While polenta bakes, coat a large nonstick skillet with cooking spray; place skillet over medium-high heat until hot. Add pesto and water, stirring well. Add yellow squash and zucchini; cover and cook 5 minutes or until vegetables are tender. Add red peppers, cook until thoroughly heated.

To serve, spoon zucchini mixture evenly over polenta, and sprinkle with cheese.

Makes 4 servings.
Fat: 1 gram per serving
Fruit/Vegetable Servings: 2 per serving
Grain Servings: 1 per serving
Recipe from Cooking Light 5-Ingredient 15-Minute Cookbook
Keeping Portions Under Control

As a Dietary Change participant, you learned long ago how to estimate portion sizes. But with trends like oversized muffins and bagels and “super”-sized fast food items, determining portion sizes can be more challenging than ever. Here are some new equivalent sizes to help keep you on track:

- 1/2 cup of vegetables equals the bulb part of a standard light bulb
- 3 ounces of meat equals a deck of cards
- 1 ounce of cheese equals 2 dominoes
- A medium baked potato (1 cup) equals a computer mouse
- A pancake or waffle equals the diameter of a compact disc (CD)
- 3 ounces of fish equals a checkbook
- 1 ounce of chocolate equals a small package of dental floss
- 1 teaspoon of peanut butter equals a thimble

Low-Fat Bites

A tip for time-pressed cooks: When cooking rice, make extra and freeze in individual or family-size portions for up to six months. To thaw and reheat the rice, microwave for one minute per cup of rice, or reheat on the stove in a pan with a small amount of water.

Looking for your familiar prunes at the grocery store? They’re now officially called “dried plums,” as the California Prune Board convinced the FDA that more consumers would buy a product labeled “dried plums.” Whatever they’re called, just five dried plums equals a F/V serving. This fat-free treat is handy for a quick snack.

Flavorful, lower-acid vinegars, such as balsamic, rice, good quality red-wine, or raspberry vinegars, allow you to cut oil in a salad dressing. The more mellow the vinegar, the less oil you need to balance the acidity.

Looking for some new ideas for low-fat, fast meals? Two recommended reads: Quick & Healthy Volume II: More Help for People Who Say They Don’t Have Time to Cook Healthy Meals; this cookbook provides almost 200 delicious low-fat recipes that can be prepared in 30 minutes or less, along with five weekly menus and corresponding grocery lists (Brenda Ponichtera, ScaleDown Publishing, 1995, ISBN 0-9629160-1-3, $16.95).


You can’t go wrong eating any fruits and vegetables, but some produce contains more nutrients than others. The top 10 heavy-hitters (those containing the most vitamin A, vitamin C, folate, potassium, and fiber) are: papayas, kiwi fruit, cantaloupe, mangoes, apricots, broccoli, spinach, tomatoes, sweet potatoes, and collard greens.
"No Sweat" Meals For Summer (continued)

Amazingly Simple Dessert Ideas

**Cantaloupe Yogurt Dessert:** Take half of a small, seeded cantaloupe and 1/2 cup fat-free vanilla frozen yogurt. Fill the center of the melon with frozen yogurt and sprinkle with 1 tablespoon of coconut. Makes 1 serving, containing about 2 grams of fat and 2-1/2 F/V servings.

**Raspberry Peach Crisp:** Pop this fresh fruit crisp into your microwave for a dessert that is done in minutes and doesn’t heat up your kitchen. Ingredients: 1 cup fresh raspberries, 2 medium peaches, thinly sliced, 1/2 cup apple or white grape juice, 1 teaspoon grated lemon peel, ground nutmeg and cinnamon to taste, and 1-1/2 cups reduced-fat granola. Lightly coat a 9-inch square microwave-safe baking dish with non-stick cooking spray. Gently toss the fruit together with juice and lemon peel and place in the baking dish. Sprinkle fruit lightly with spices and top with granola. Cook on HIGH, uncovered, for 8-10 minutes or until the fruit is tender and bubbly. Allow the crisp to cool before serving. Makes 6 servings. Each serving provides about 3 grams of fat, 1 F/V serving and 1 Grain serving.

**Elegant Fruit Puree:** Blend frozen melon balls, berries, or cherries with a little sugar or honey to make an icy fruit puree. Garnish with mint leaves, if desired. Each 1/2 cup provides 1 F/V serving.