Lotsa Pasta

IF YOU'RE LOOKING FOR FOOD THAT'S EASY TO PREPARE, naturally low in fat, versatile, nutritious, and inexpensive, pasta is the answer. All noodles, like macaroni, spaghetti, or egg noodles, are called pasta. According to the National Pasta Association, Americans buy 1.3 billion pounds of pasta on average per year—that's enough packages of spaghetti stacked end-to-end to circle the earth nearly nine times! As a WHI participant, you might not eat that much pasta, but eating it often is a good way to meet your grain goal. Here are some pasta pointers:

IS PASTA FATTENING?
- Pasta is very low in fat. However, if you eat too much of any food, you can gain weight. Next time you eat pasta, measure your portion size. How much do you eat? A 1/2 cup serving of cooked pasta contains one gram of fat and is one grain serving.
- You can make your favorite pasta recipes lower in fat by substituting certain ingredients. For example, the fat content of macaroni and cheese can be lowered by substituting skim milk and reduced-fat cheese for the traditional full-fat ingredients. Add some shredded vegetables to help meet your fruit/vegetable goal, as well.

PERFECT PASTA
- Pasta cooks more evenly when it can move freely in the boiling water. Use a large stockpot and plenty of water (four to six quarts of water per pound of pasta). It is not necessary to add oil to the water to keep pasta separated.
- If you're using pasta in a casserole, undercook it by two minutes so it will not overcook when baked.
- Hot pasta cools quickly when placed on room-temperature dishes. To prevent this, run hot water over the serving dishes and dry them off just before serving the pasta. The pasta will remain hot longer on pre-warmed dishes.

VERSATILE LEFTOVERS
- Refrigerate leftover pasta in an airtight container for up to one week or freeze it up to a month. You may want to use non-stick cooking spray on the dish to keep it from sticking when cold. Because cooked pasta will absorb flavors and oils from sauces, store cooked noodles separately from sauces.
- To reheat, place pasta in a colander and pour boiling water over it. Or place it in a microwave-safe bowl, and microwave on HIGH for 30 seconds to one minute.
- Baked pasta recipes freeze especially well. For best results, prepare the recipe and freeze it before baking.

Look inside this issue of Making WHIse Choices for two low-fat pasta recipes and pasta sauce tips. Buon gusto!
Courage to Change: One Woman’s Thoughts

(Editor’s Note: Carol Smart, a Dietary Change participant at the Milwaukee Clinical Center, shared her inspiring perspectives on making lifestyle changes during a recent phone interview.)

‘M’

y name is Carol O’Loughlin Smart. I’m a wife, mother (five sons and one daughter), and grandmother. I am a community volunteer and Oneida tribal member. I’ve spent all of my 57 years in beautiful Wisconsin. I briefly taught school and now work as a Realtor in my husband’s small office. My grandmother, Dr. Rosa Minoka-Hill, was one of the first American Indian women physicians. I had always been nagged by a need to share the remarkable experience of having known a truly great woman, so I wrote and now perform her story as a 1-1/2 hour, one-woman play. I consider myself fortunate to have finally embraced such an obvious, though challenging, life purpose.

I believe in the Women’s Health Initiative. I love our group and our dietary instructor, Alice Thomson. When I stepped up to volunteer, I thought I would be doing all the giving. Instead, I’ve been a beneficiary of tons of invaluable information. I truly hope I can help make a difference now and perhaps even after I’m gone.

Still, the dietary changes are far more difficult than I anticipated. So, I’ve re-examined my resistance to change and here are some of my conclusions:

First, change requires risk-taking skills which were not particularly cultivated by the women of my generation. We’ve done well in the ‘peace at any price’ mode as wife, mother, and in our numerous caregiving jobs.

Second, risk-taking/change is frightening because it isolates us. Often the people we spend our very lives nurturing are resistant to altering the status quo, resistant to our personal growth. Our attempts to change are doomed if we don’t expect to basically go it alone. My family has been fairly supportive, but I’ve learned that my commitment must be internalized, as it is otherwise too easy to slide back into old bad habits.

Thirdly, risk-taking/change feels a little ‘crazy-making.’ It feels like jumping into strange waters while doubting one’s swimming ability. When the last of our children seemed well entrenched in his college education, I took a basic theater course. The class was comprised of college freshmen and myself, at age 50. I remember I was wearing the second pair of blue jeans I ever owned as our class worked the catwalks high above the theater. It was my Mt. Everest. I remember wondering how I got there and then suddenly realizing that I had been propelled through countless risks by examples of courageous women.

Still, when one’s feet are back on old turf, it’s easy to forget the new visions and insights. But most of us will reckon with the lessons of change and adjustments as we battle the losses of elderhood—as we say good-bye to places we’ll not see again, mistakes we cannot remedy, loved ones we can no longer hug. So, shouldn’t we be arming ourselves with new skills while we still own the stamina with which to change our world?”

Carol Smart, performing her one-woman play, “Yu’tetsy’ t” which translates to “Honorable Woman Doctor.”
Bow Ties with Black Bean Salsa and Cherry Tomatoes

8 ounces bow ties, elbow macaroni or other medium pasta shape, uncooked
2 tablespoons olive oil
1 bunch green onions, trimmed and thinly sliced (green and white parts)
1-1/2 teaspoons ground cumin
1-1/2 tablespoons fresh lime juice
1 can (16 ounces) black beans, drained and rinsed
1/4 teaspoon salt, or to taste
freshly ground pepper, to taste
8 cherry tomatoes, rinsed and quartered
2 tablespoons chopped fresh cilantro or parsley

Prepare pasta according to package directions. While pasta is cooking, heat the oil in a medium saucepan over medium heat. Add green onions and cumin and cook for 2 minutes. Remove from heat and stir in the lime juice. Add the beans, salt and pepper and toss to coat. (The salsa can be made and refrigerated up to one day in advance.)

Just before draining the pasta, measure 1/2 cup of the cooking water into the black bean salsa. Drain the pasta, return it to the pot and add the bean mixture. Cook over medium heat until the sauce is boiling and thick enough to lightly coat the pasta. Remove the pot from heat and gently stir in cherry tomatoes and cilantro. Serve immediately.

Makes about 8 cups
Fat Grams: 5 grams per cup
Grain Servings: 2 servings per cup
Recipe from: The National Pasta Association
**Speedy Ziti with Zesty Chicken**

1 pound ziti, mostaccioli (penne), or other medium pasta shape, uncooked
12 ounces chopped, cooked chicken, white meat without skin
2 teaspoon margarine
1 medium onion chopped
1 tablespoon Dijon mustard
2 tablespoons all-purpose flour
2 cups fat-free chicken broth
1/4 cup lemon juice
1 package (10 ounces) frozen peas, defrosted and drained
1/4 cup fresh parsley, chopped
salt and pepper to taste

Prepare pasta according to package directions. While pasta is cooking, warm the margarine over medium heat in a large skillet. Add the onion and cook for 3 minutes. Stir in the Dijon mustard and flour. Very gradually whisk in the chicken broth. Bring the broth to a boil and stir in the lemon juice, peas and parsley.

When pasta is done, drain it well. Toss pasta and cooked chicken with the sauce, season with salt and pepper and serve.

Makes about 13 cups
Fat Grams: 3 grams per cup
Grain Servings: 1 serving per cup
Fruit/Vegetable Servings: 1/2 serving per cup
Recipe from: The National Pasta Association
HERALDED VOLUNTEER SHARES THE WEALTH

Rose Ross, a Dietary Change group member at the Evanston, Illinois Clinical Center, gives more than her time to WHI. She recently donated $250 to her clinic; the money was awarded to her by her employer, Marshall Field's, in honor of her volunteer commitment. The Evanston Clinic plans to use the donation to hold a special event or create a resource library for the women in their Dietary programs. Thank you, Rose!

WHAT'S NEW

This information is furnished to help you become aware of new food products and help you make wise choices among brand name foods, as well as generic foods. The information provided in this section is not an endorsement of specific food products by WHI. It is important to read product labels for the most current information since the ingredients in foods sometimes change.

- Canned cream soups make an easy base for chilly weather casseroles. Campbell's Reduced Fat Soups fit the bill, with flavors like cream of mushroom, cream of chicken, and cream of celery. They have the same rich taste as regular cream-based soups, but with only 9-10 grams of fat per can, versus 15-20 of fat in the regular lines.

- Check out Sunsweet Lighter Bake, a new fruit-based fat replacer for moist, chewy baked goods. Ingredients include dried apples and plums, and it can replace all of the butter, oil, margarine, or shortening in recipes. Other good fat substitutes in baked goods are applesauce, yogurt, or prune puree.

- Ready to savor some spaghetti, but aren't up for making your own sauce? Bottled pasta sauces make a quick, tasty meal, but read labels carefully—some brands contain a lot of oil. Eating Well magazine did a taste test of 17 brands and Barilla Marinara Pasta Sauce took first prize. Thick and chunky with a strong tomato flavor, it's the best-selling brand in Italy and has less than three grams of fat per half-cup serving of sauce.

- Cookbooks containing recipes using a lot of pantry items (such as rice or frozen vegetables) make it easy to prepare everyday meals without frequent trips to the grocery store. One such cookbook is Trim & Terrific American Favorites, a collection of over 250 recipes, ranging from Chicken in Cream Sauce to Coffee Toffee Brownies. All of the recipes are low-fat and easy to prepare (Holly Berkowitz Clegg, Clarkson Potter/Publishers, $18.95).

- Since eating plenty of fruits and vegetables is one of your WHI goals, try storing your produce in Evert-fresh Produce Storage Bags. These are no ordinary plastic bags; they contain tiny holes to allow air to circulate and the plastic contains a natural substance that reduces spoilage. Studies show that fruits and vegetables stored in these bags last up to 10 times longer than usual.
Food For Thought

- Fall is often a season of switching gears—summer vacations end, visitors return home, and temperatures drop. If you've gotten off track with your fat gram goal over the summer, now is a good time to renew your efforts and move ahead with your dietary plan.

- Spinach pasta contains very little spinach—less than a tablespoon per cup of cooked pasta, so it doesn't contribute to your fruit/vegetable goal. In fact, all pasta made with vegetable purees contain only enough to add color and a hint of flavor.

- Sales of pretzels have been booming, so food makers are coming out with new flavor twists. Keep reading labels, though—some, such as cinnamon sugar varieties, are still low-fat, but others have high-fat add-ons (chocolate, nuts, etc.).

- It's sometimes discouraging to face a more limited produce selection after the summer's bounty of fresh fruits and vegetables. Instead of focusing on what's not in season, check out what is readily available in autumn—root vegetables, such as carrots, rutabaga, squash, potatoes, beets, and pumpkins, as well as kale and greens. Don't pass up delicious tree fruits, too, like apples, apricots, and pears.

- Can you safely eat fruit that's moldy? Small fruits, such as grapes or berries, should definitely be thrown out if moldy. But with larger fruits like pears and tomatoes, it's usually safe to cut out the moldy part and eat the rest. But there may be more mold than you can see (mold has threadlike roots), so cut widely. If you have any doubt, throw away the whole fruit.

- When preparing tomato sauce (your own or a store brand), think about whether you really need to add meat. By omitting one pound of extra lean hamburger (15% fat) from the pasta sauce, you can eliminate 52 grams of fat. Instead, try adding mushrooms or chunks of roasted eggplant. These vegetables create a rich flavor and add a “meaty” texture to sauces.

- Plan ahead for ways to deal with the Halloween candy left after the trick-or-treaters head home. Buy candy you don't like, or that's low in fat, like licorice or jellybeans. You could also give the youngsters a candy alternative, such as stickers or erasers.

---

Making WHI's Choices is produced quarterly by the WHI Coordinating Center at Fred Hutchinson Cancer Research Center.

Editor: Colleen Steelequist
Assistant Editor: Sona Mulye
Design: Teri Platt
Scientific Advisors: Beth Burrows, MS, RD
Lesley Tinker, PhD, RD