

Enjoying Plant Foods for Eye Health

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The easiest and probably the most important way to increase the health benefits of your diet is to eat more plant foods!

Plant foods are rich in nutrients that are good for overall health. They:

- Provide over a dozen vitamins and minerals that participate in over a thousand activities to keep your body running efficiently.
- Provide phytochemicals that act in a number of ways to prevent the cell damage that can lead to disease.
- Provide an excellent source of fiber for a healthy digestive system and to help blood sugar rise slowly after a meal.

These important nutrients specifically help your eyes. They:

- Are antioxidants to fight the free radicals that could cause eye damage.
- Provide the pigments lutein and zeaxanthin that absorb excessive light in the eye.
- Protect against inflammation.

Plant Foods Include: Fruits  Vegetables  Whole grains 
Seeds and Nuts  Beans and legumes 

Leafy greens- Nutritional Powerhouses

Dark green leafy vegetables like spinach, kale and broccoli are especially good for you because they are packed with many vitamins and minerals. Additionally, these dark green leafy vegetables provide 10-20 times more lutein and zeaxanthin (nutrients believed to support good vision) than other fruits and vegetables. To enhance the absorption of lutein and zeaxanthin from these and other fruits and vegetables, consider adding a source of fat such as avocados, eggs or nuts to your meal.

Revised September 10, 2012

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Simple ways to prepare plant foods:

Raw:

In the height of the season, many plant foods are best eaten raw.

TRY: Freshly picked ripe juicy tomatoes and sweet sugar snap peas or a small handful of raw nuts or seeds (often high in vitamin E and omega-3 fats) can be a satisfying snack or enhance the taste of salads.

Roasted:

Many vegetables are delicious roasted with a little oil and salt and pepper added as they come out of the oven. Have fun adding herbs (garlic, oregano, parsley and/or basil for a savory taste or ginger, cinnamon and/or nutmeg for a sweeter taste and a few teaspoons of honey and/or maple syrup) to vary the flavor. Roasting vegetables requires minimal effort. Heat vegetables for 30-60 minutes at 400-425 degrees. This sweetens and enhances the flavor.

TRY: Roast a variety of chopped or sliced root vegetables (carrots, sweet potatoes, parsnips, turnips tossed with a few tablespoons of oil, a little fresh or powdered ginger, sprinkle of salt and a tablespoon of maple syrup. Bake 50 minute at 425 degrees, or until tender.

Steamed:

Broccoli, kale, spinach, peas, green beans and Brussels sprouts (all good ways to get carotenoids such as lutein and zeaxanthin) are some of the many vegetables that are especially good steamed and served with a small amount of butter, nut or olive oil, salt and pepper. The vegetables can be cut up, put in a steamer and cooked in a covered saucepan over a small amount of water. Expandable steamers will fit into a wide range of saucepans. Steaming preserves the texture of the foods and is a good cooking method for those who prefer there vegetables with a bit of a bite.

TRY: Add a splash of freshly squeezed lemon to steamed vegetables for a refreshing twist or a few tablespoons of raw or toasted nuts for a satisfying way to get more protein and vitamin E.

Microwaved:

This is a quick way to cook vegetables. Only a small amount of liquid is added to the food. Fat is not required for cooking and the vegetables can be seasoned with fresh chopped herbs. You can also enhance the flavor by adding a little lemon juice

Sautéed or Stir-fried

Dark leafy greens including spinach and kale are quick and easy to sauté. Other vegetables such as broccoli, zucchini, green or red peppers, mushrooms and onions can

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be cut into small pieces so they cook evenly and quickly. Heat the oil in a wok or frying pan before adding oil or any of the ingredients. Once all of the ingredients are added, use a wooden spoon or non-stick slotted spoon to stir the ingredients and prevent burning.

Add More Vegetables to the Dishes You Make:

Soups: Adding a few handfuls of spinach or kale to soups or stews in the last 10 minutes of cooking not only improves the flavor, but is an easy way to increase our intake of these nutrition powerhouses.



Omelets: Add fresh, steamed or cooked spinach or sautéed red pepper to omelets. Eggs contain lutein and zeaxanthin that are especially easily absorbed into our bodies. Add dark leafy greens alone or with other vegetables (such as onions, garlic and tomatoes) to make a tasty and healthy breakfast, lunch or supper.

Frittatas: A cousin of an omelet, a **frittata** is like a crustless quiche and can be a great way to have vegetables. Like omelets, many different vegetable and spice combinations can be good.

TRY: Spinach, Red Pepper and Basil Frittata. Inspired by a recipe from Annie Sommerfield in “Fields of Greens” (Bantam, 2003)

In an oven-proof small frying pan, sauté 1 chopped onion with a little salt. When translucent add 1/2 c. chopped red pepper. When wilted, add 1/2-1 cup broccoli or a handful of spinach. Cool a bit.

Meanwhile, break three eggs in a bowl and whip with a fork along with 1/4 cup freshly grated parmesan cheese, 1/8 teaspoon salt, about 1 teaspoon dried or up to 1/4 cup fresh basil and pepper to taste. Add sautéed vegetables and cook over low heat for a few minutes until the bottom is set. Bake about 15-20 minutes longer at 350 degrees. Optional but tasty twist: Meanwhile, boil 1/2 cup balsamic vinegar over the stove to reduce by half. When frittata is set, take it out of the oven and spread the reduced balsamic glaze over the top. (The frittata can also be inverted on a plate and then spread with reduced balsamic for a fancier way to serve it).

Quesadillas: Spread a combination of bean and/or vegetable fillings on one half of a whole wheat tortilla. If you add cheese, experiment with reducing the amount. Fold over and brown on each side, in a skillet. Serve with salsa.

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TRY: Sweet Potato/Corn Quesadilla

Cool and mash a leftover or microwaved sweet potato. Stir in 1 cup cooked corn and a pinch of cayenne pepper. Spread on tortilla and top with *small amount* sliced or grated cheddar or Monterey jack cheese. Optional: add a few cups spinach or kale sautéed in the pan before browning the tortilla. Serve with cranberry sauce and a tablespoon of low-fat Greek yogurt. (You can use sour cream but the low-fat yogurt is lower in fat and Greek style yogurt tastes so rich that you cannot tell the difference).

TRY: Sautéed Kale and Parsnips

Ingredients:

Few tablespoons of olive oil (optional: For added flavor, add this to a fried slice of bacon)

1 chopped onion

Peeled and sliced parsnips (about 5)

1 bunch of kale, course chopped (about 4 cups) - center stem removed

1. Place a few tablespoons of olive oil in a large frying pan.
2. Sauté onion about 5 minutes with a few dashes of salt and pepper (or longer at medium heat if you want a more caramelized flavor)
3. Add and sauté for an additional 5-10 minutes parsnips (until tender).
4. Add kale, cover and cook under medium-low heat for 5-10 minutes.
5. Season to your taste with salt and pepper.



Salads: It's simple!

1. Start with a large bowl of washed and ripped dark greens that you like (spinach, arugula, lettuce) that is big enough to toss with the dressing. Use about 6 cups for two people.
2. Add vegetables, fruits, nuts, seeds, fish, beans or small amounts of meat or cheese- A few of our favorite combinations are given below.
3. Make a simple dressing in a mug or jar. You can make enough for a few days- it tastes better fresh. The following is enough for about 4 salads of 3 cups of greens per salad:
Vinegar: 2 TB vinegar (apple cider, balsamic, wine) or 1/4 cup citrus juice (lime, orange or lemon)
Oil: 1/4 cup oil (such as walnut or olive)



Seasonings: 1/2 teaspoon mustard or 1/2 teaspoon salt, Pepper, to taste
Use small amounts of dressing and get big flavor from the things you add (such as spices and garlic listed below)

Alternative: See also the Green Goddess Dressing recipe, following, to add a nutritional punch.

4. Toss in a bowl until evenly distributed just before serving.



Try some tasty combinations:

Strawberry and Orange salad: Add to greens: Sliced strawberries, pecans or walnuts, oranges (and, if you like them, red onion slices) The dressing: Use lime or orange juice, and oil (try walnut oil). Seasonings: Use salt instead of mustard and add 1/2 to 1 teaspoon of cinnamon, a pinch of cayenne pepper or a few drops Tabasco sauce.

Apple, Maple, Basil Salad: Add to greens: chopped apples (and/or pears), chopped basil (or add dried basil to the dressing), few slices parmesan cheese. The dressing: Use balsamic vinegar and oil. Seasonings: Salt and 2 TB of maple syrup.

Lake Superior Trout Salad: Add to greens: Flaked and boned smoked or cooked trout (can also use cooked, smoked or canned salmon, tuna or mackerel). Lake Superior Trout and other cold water fish are high in long-chain omega- three fatty acids. Use the size of one half to one palm of your hand (1 1/2 to 3 ounces) per person. Add beets, tomatoes, mango or nectarine and thinly sliced onion.

The dressing: Use lemon, lime or orange juice, or a light vinegar and any oil (I like olive here) Seasonings: Use salt (for when fruits are used) or mustard. Other possible additions, ginger and maple syrup (especially if beets or fruit are used), capers (if tomatoes are used)

Pear, Parmesan, Arugula Salad: Greens: Use arugula (also called rocket) for some or all of greens, add a few slices of parmesan. The dressing: Use lemon juice and olive oil. Either salt or mustard is good.

Mediterranean Lemon Herb Salad: To greens add: variety of vegetables such as carrots, tomato, and red pepper. The dressing: Use lemon juice and olive oil. Seasonings: Two cloves of garlic minced, 1 TB each of parsley, oregano and basil if dried or 2 Tb if they are fresh.

Avocado, Grapefruit, Almond Salad: To greens: Add a chopped grapefruit (or orange), 1/4 cup toasted almonds or coarsely shredded unsweetened coconut, half of a sliced avocado. The dressing: Use lime juice and any oil. Seasonings: Salt instead of mustard and 1 teaspoon honey.

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Curry, Apple, Beet Salad: To greens add: 1 chopped apple, 1/4 cup chopped walnuts, about 1 cup beets. The dressing: Use orange juice (grate the orange peel and add to the salad) or a combination of orange juice and cider vinegar and walnut or other light oil. Seasonings: Add salt and 1 teaspoon curry powder.

Mango and Ginger Salad: Add to greens: Sliced mangos, pecans or walnuts, and, if you like them, red onion slices. In the dressing: Use lime or orange juice, salt instead of mustard and 1/2 to 1 teaspoon freshly grated ginger. Sometime a pinch of cayenne and a tablespoon or so of chopped fresh or crystallized ginger.

Garbanzo Bean Salad: To greens add: Cooked or canned garbanzo or white beans and variety of vegetables such as tomato, red pepper and onions. The dressing: Use lemon juice or a light vinegar and olive oil. Seasonings: Two cloves of garlic minced, 1 TB each of parsley, oregano and basil if dried or 2 Tb if they are fresh.

August Blueberry and Cantaloupe Salad: Add to greens: Large cantaloupe pieces, fresh blueberries and toasted pumpkin seeds (or nuts), In the dressing: Use lime juice and white wine, balsamic or champagne vinegar, salt and 1 teaspoon honey.

Purslane, Spinach Salad: Greens: Combination of purslane (remove thick stems) and spinach. Add to the greens: Sliced radishes and pears. In the dressing: Use fresh lemon and lime juice and olive oil. Add 1/8 teaspoon crushed dry red pepper and 1 teas honey to seasonings.

Green Goddess Dressing

Makes about 1 1/2 cups

A tangy dressing that is great on sliced tomatoes, mixed greens, hard-boiled eggs, fish or cold steamed potatoes.

- **1 cup packed green leaves (watercress, kale (ribs removed), spinach, arugula)**
- **1 cup plain yogurt (I like Greek Style)**
- **1/2 cup fresh green herbs in season, such as:**
 - **2 tablespoons (packed) chopped fresh dill**
 - **2 tablespoons (packed) chopped fresh basil**
 - **3 tablespoons chopped parsley leaves and stems**
 - **1 tablespoon (packed) chopped fresh mint**
- **2 tablespoons chopped green onion or chives**
- **1 clove fresh garlic, minced**
- **1 teaspoon red wine vinegar or lemon juice**
- **1 teaspoon olive oil**
- **Additional flavorings. Choose 1:**
 - **2 teaspoons white Miso**
 - **dash of cayenne pepper or**
 - **1/4 teaspoon hot sauce**

Cook greens in boiling water for 30 seconds. (2 minutes for tougher greens like kale). Drain. Pat greens dry with paper towels. Blend greens in blender or food processor with herbs and then remaining ingredients and puree until smooth, thinning with more yogurt or water, if desired. Transfer dressing to bowl. Season dressing to taste with salt and pepper. Can be prepared 3 days ahead and refrigerated.

KALE is good raw too:

Kale and Cabbage Slaw

Makes 4 servings: 1 $\frac{3}{4}$ cups each

Good for mid-summer when the cabbage just comes and the kale is coming fast and thick...

Combine:

1 small head cabbage, sliced

About 6-8 large leaves of kale, sliced

4 carrots grated

Celery leaves, chopped about 1/2 cup

3/4 cup peanuts

Add Dressing:

1/2 cup yogurt

3 Tb olive oil

3 Tb honey

2 teaspoons cider vinegar

Juice of one lemon

Freshly ground pepper (about $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon)

1/2 teas salt

1/2- 1 teas celery seed

Garlic and Ginger Salmon with Greens

Serves 3-4

- About 1 pound salmon or lake trout fillet (salmon steaks would work, too)
- 2 cups lightly steamed green beans or
Kale (tough center removed, washed and coarsely ripped or chopped)

Sauce:

- 1 to 2 Tb grated or finely chopped ginger
- About 2 TB finely chopped shallots, onions
- 1 Tb chopped garlic
- 2-3 Tb maple syrup
- 1/4 cup garlic and bean paste (found in Asian foods section of most grocery stores)
- 1/2 cup rice wine (skip, if you have used wine to poach the salmon and have about 1/2 cup left)
- 1 TB soy sauce

I sometimes add for a kick or change (but they are optional) some or all of the following: 1/2 teas hot chili sesame oil, 1 teaspoon sesame oil. 2 TB toasted sesame seeds.

These are all approximate...have fun adjusting to your taste.

- Place a few tablespoons of a light olive oil in the bottom of a frying pan. Place a salmon fillet (skin side down) over the top.
- Add 1/2 cup white wine or rice wine and few slices of lemon over salmon (optional)
- Cover. Bring liquid to simmer to poach salmon until it flakes (5-15 minutes depending on thickness and heat intensity).
- While salmon is poaching make the sauce. When salmon is flaking, pour sauce over salmon.
- Remove salmon letting excess sauce drain back into the pan. Scrape up any sticking salmon skin and discard. Add the sauce to the poaching liquids and boil until it is thick and syrupy. Turn off heat. Mix green beans in sauce to coat and remove. If using kale, cook about 3-5 minutes in poaching liquids after removing fish.
- Pour remaining sauce over salmon and serve green beans or kale along side. A baked sweet potato goes well with this dish.

Avocado Benedict

Serves 2-4

Olive oil, unrefined, virgin

1 Onion

1 (or more) Clove garlic, chopped

½ to 1 Bunch (about 6 cups ripped or coarsely chopped) mustard greens (organic, if possible; arugula, sorrel, spinach or other strongly flavored dark greens work too)

Chopped parsley, ½ cup

1 Lemon (organic, if possible as the zest will be used)

1 Large avocado (or 2 small)

4 Eggs, poached or soft boiled

4 Slices whole grain toast or English muffin (optional as it works simply over greens, too)

1. Chop onion and sauté with a pinch of salt and pepper in small amount of olive oil
2. Chop garlic
3. Sauté greens in oil or small amount (about ½ cup of water) until wilted. Add small splash of olive oil, salt and pepper, some more minced garlic and cook for a minute more.
4. Make avocado salsa:

Mash avocado with fork in bowl

Add sautéed onion and chopped garlic and parsley

Add the grated peel and juice of 1 lemon

5. Toast bread or English muffins

6. Assemble:

Cover each slice of bread with ¼ of the cooked greens

Top with ¼ of avocado salsa

Top with poached or sliced soft boiled (or hard boiled) egg

Sprinkle with your favorite sea salt and pepper.

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