



Food & Fitness



Alice Henneman, RD, LMNT, Extension Educator

Enjoy these two summer salad recipes from the National Cancer Institute's 5 A Day Program. The goal of the National 5 A Day for Better Health Program is to increase the consumption of fruits and vegetables in the United States to 5 to 9 servings every day. Eating fruits and vegetables can improve your health and reduce the risk of cancer and other diseases,



including heart disease, hypertension, diabetes and macular degeneration. Both these recipes were created by TV cooking personality and cookbook author, Graham Kerr. For more recipes and health promotion tips from the National Cancer Institute, check: www.5aday.gov

Cucumber Salad With Tomatoes

2 cups diced cucumber
1 cup seeded and diced tomatoes
1/4 cup chopped sweet onions
2 cups cooked couscous or rice
2 teaspoons fresh chopped dill weed or 1/2 teaspoon dried dillweed
1/2 cup low-fat vinaigrette salad dressing

Toss together the cucumbers, tomatoes, onions, couscous or rice, dill and salad dressing. Chill for 1 hour and serve.

Serves: 4

Fruit and Vegetable Servings Per Person: 1.5

Nutritional Analysis Per Serving: 153 calories, 5 g fat, 1 g saturated fat, 24 g carbohydrates, 2 g fiber, 107 mg sodium

Sumptuous Summer Salad

1 cup chopped zucchini
1 cup fresh, canned or frozen corn kernels
1 cup chopped, seeded tomatoes
1 cup fresh or frozen peas
1/4 cup sliced green onions
2 cups cooked rice, quinoa, bulgar or millet
1/4 cup chopped fresh basil
1/3 cup low-fat vinaigrette salad dressing
6 large butter or leaf lettuce leaves

Combine the zucchini, corn, tomatoes, peas, onion, rice, basil and salad dressing in a large bowl. Mix well and let sit for at least one-half hour. Serve on lettuce leaves with a good slice of crusty whole wheat bread.

Serves: 6

Fruit and Vegetable Servings Per Person: 1.5

Nutritional Analysis Per Serving: 164 calories, 5 g fat, 1 g saturated fat, 26 g carbohydrates, 4 g fiber, 118 mg sodium

Packing Your Lunch Can Save You More Than Money



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Would you like to have an extra \$500 plus a year? A fairly simple way to do this is to **pack your own lunch**. If you work away from your home and typically "eat out" at lunch time, packing your own lunch can save a lot of money. Perhaps just as important, by packing your lunch, you avoid the noon "rush." You don't have to decide what you will eat, where you will purchase it or go anywhere to get it.

Let's discuss how you could save money. Say you spend an average of \$3 a day on lunch at a fast-food or other restaurant. Over just a one-month period, you could easily save over \$50. That really adds up over the course of a year. There is some cost to packing a lunch, but by being creative and using your available resources, the cost is far less than eating out.

The secret to packing your lunch is to **pack it the evening before**. Then, all you have to do before you head to work is take your lunch bag out of the refrigerator.

If refrigeration is not available at your work site, carry food in an insulated lunch box or bag and include an ice pack or gel freezer pack before you head for work. Have your foods

"refrigerator-cold" before you pack them in the insulated bag. **It is important to keep foods cold until they are heated** and then to discard any leftovers held at room temperature for more than two hours.

When we pack our lunch, we often include more fruits and vegetables as well as good calcium sources than when eating at fast-food places. Also, we tend to do a better job of controlling the portion-size of foods and choose foods lower in fat, salt and sugar.

The nice part of bringing your lunch, as noontime approaches, you can look forward to taking a break and eating at your convenience. There are many reasons to pack your own lunch and saving money is just one of those reasons.

Get Creative Packing Your Lunch!

Here are some easy, practical ideas to help you either start packing your lunch or to help you think of some interesting and new ways to expand your take-it-with-you lunch.

- **Probably the most obvious is to use "leftovers."** With the variety of inexpensive containers, bags and holders available on the market, this has gotten easier and much more fun. For best safety and quality, eat leftovers in a day or two or freeze them.

If you have a bit of lasagna, casserole or soup left over, save it for lunch the next day. Use the microwave oven at the office to re-heat your entree. Or, use leftovers, such as rice, pasta or potatoes as a "starter" for your entree. Add sliced, chopped or ground meat or cheese to make a simple casserole. Divide it up into several containers for more than one lunch.

- **If you decide to "go with a sandwich," make it interesting!** It is much more likely you will look forward to taking your lunch break.

Besides plain bread, be creative and think about what other grain products can you use to create a sandwich.

Make a pita pocket or a sandwich using a bagel or English muffin or biscuit. Try two waffles, crackers, hamburger or hoagie buns. Use a corn tortilla, flour tortilla, flat bread or a leftover pancake. Try different types of bread, including rye bread and other whole-grain breads. For variety, roll up salad greens such as lettuce, spinach, or cabbage to make a sandwich.

What you put in the "sandwich" can be just as tasty and creative. Low-fat, low-salt deli and pre-packaged meats are readily available. The lunch meat can be ground, sliced or chopped and low-fat ranch dressing, low-fat mayonnaise, sweet and sour sauce, barbecue sauce or spicy mustard added for flavor. Perhaps you prepared roast beef, pork or even hot dogs or hamburgers over the weekend. Just slice and freeze the meat in small containers for use in lunches. Cook chicken breasts and slice or make into chicken salad. Cook extra ground meats including beef, pork, turkey or chicken and freeze it in small containers to be used for Sloppy Joes or taco salad or added to pasta, potatoes or rice.

Tuna, salmon or other canned seafood provide great variety and add nutrients to your lunch routine. Other possibilities

for sandwiches which are good sources of protein include sliced hard-cooked eggs, sliced cheese or cheese spread or legumes including peanut butter or cooked beans.

- **Not everything has to be "home-made."** Buy a large pizza, chicken pieces or breaded fish fillets and put a serving in individual sandwich bags. Then freeze the small bags in a large container for use in lunches at a later time. Open a can of low-sodium soup or stew and put it in containers for several lunches. Any prepared food that can be refrigerated or frozen and then reheated can be packed for lunch.

- **Include foods from all five food groups!** To go along with the entree, put some grapes, strawberries, orange slices, melon slices, apple slices or other favorite fruit in a resealable sandwich bag. There are many vegetables that can be eaten as finger foods, such as baby carrots, celery, broccoli, cucumbers or cauliflower. Any cooked leftover vegetables can be reheated in a small microwave-safe container for lunch the next day. Add yogurt, milk or other dairy product and you have a healthy selection of foods.

The Food/Physical Activity Connection

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Many of us become more physically active during the summer months. Whether you're an easy-going exerciser or an avid athlete, how you eat affects both your PERFORMANCE and your PLEASURE during physical activities. Whether you're taking a walk through the neighborhood or tackling a triathlon, you'll likely do better if you fuel up with

healthy foods.

Recently I had the opportunity to interview sports nutritionist Nancy Clark for my online Food Reflections newsletter (<http://lancaster.unl.edu/food/foodtalk.htm>). To help you make the best food/physical activity connection, here are some suggestions from Clark based on her *Sports Nutrition Guidebook*.

NEBLINE: In your book, *Nancy Clark's Sports Nutrition Guidebook*, you use the Food Guide Pyramid as the basis for planning a healthy diet for an

active lifestyle. One of the points you make is about the importance of eating a variety of foods. Why is this so important?

Nancy Clark: By eating a variety of foods, you consume a variety of different vitamins, minerals, amino acids, phytochemicals and other health-protective nutrients. Often these nutrients work best in combinations from different foods. By eating at least three types of foods at each meal and two types of foods at snacktime, you'll take a step to including a

better variety of foods.

NEBLINE: Drinking sufficient fluids goes along with adding fiber to the diet. Also, adequate fluid is important to keeping an active person well-hydrated and at peak performance. How can people tell if they're drinking enough fluids? What dangers might be associated with being chronically dehydrated?

Nancy Clark: If your urine is pale yellow (like lemonade) and of significant volume, you're getting enough fluid. You should need to urinate every two

to four hours. If you urinate only once or twice a day, and the urine is dark (like beer) and smelly, you are dehydrated. Dehydration leads to needless fatigue, headaches and poorer exercise performance.

NEBLINE: It's a common belief that physically active people require high protein diets. What would be a sample meal plan that includes enough protein for most active lifestyles? What are some consequences to eating TOO MUCH protein?

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