



Alice Henneman, RD, Extension Educator

March is National Peanut Butter Month as well as National Nutrition Month and a good time to celebrate the nutritional value of peanuts. Peanuts, which are actually a form of legume, provide vitamin E, niacin, folate, phosphorus and magnesium. They're also cholesterol-free and low in saturated fat.

The DASH diet to lower blood pressure found a healthy diet included four to five servings of nuts, seeds and legumes weekly. According to a study published in the November 27, 2002, *Journal of the American Medical Association*, Harvard School of Public Health researchers found consuming a half serving (one tablespoon) of peanut butter or a full serving of peanuts or other nuts (an ounce), five or more times a week was associated with a 21 percent and 27 percent reduced risk of developing type 2 diabetes, respectively. Here is a quick and easy recipe from the Peanut Advisory Board to help you enjoy peanuts. For more ideas, visit www.peanutbutterlovers.com and www.peanut-institute.org

Easy PB & Banana Waffles

2 frozen waffles, prepared
2 tablespoons peanut butter
1 medium banana

Spread peanut butter on warm waffles. Top with sliced bananas.

Per Serving: 513 calories, 14g protein, 24g total fat (5g saturated fat), 63g carbohydrates, 5g dietary fiber, 25mg cholesterol, 634mg sodium. Daily Value: 32% folacin, 20% vitamin A, 15% vitamin C, 6% calcium, 25% iron.

Eating Dairy Products May Help Children Control Their Weight

Calcium's role in building strong and healthy bones is well-known and new research indicates consumption of calcium-rich foods like dairy products may be related to lower body fat among children.

The study was published in the December issue of the *Journal of the American Dietetic Association*. The researchers examined eating habits of children ages 2 to 8 and their mothers, finding kids who consumed lower amounts of calcium had overall higher body fat than children with high calcium intake.

The researchers also note children's dietary preferences, which generally follow us into adulthood, are established very early — often by age 5.

This study offers more evidence children should be strongly encouraged to regularly include calcium-rich foods and beverages in their diets. As always, kids' best role models for good nutrition and physical activity are their parents.

Source: American Dietetic Association (ADA) Tip of the Day. For more tips and information about nutrition during ADA's National Nutrition Month® this March, visit www.eatright.org (AH)

Eating GREEN on St. Patrick's Day

See GREEN on St. Patrick's Day this March 17, and throughout the year. The Produce for Better Health Foundation (PBH) advises: "Go Green. Go Healthy."

Green fruits and vegetables contain many health-promoting phytochemicals including lutein and indoles. They help protect against certain cancers and help maintain vision health and strong bones and teeth.

Some green fruits and vegetables include avocados, green grapes, honeydew melons, kiwi fruit, broccoli, brussels sprouts, green beans, green

cabbage, leafy greens, lettuce, peas, green peppers and spinach. For additional green fruit and vegetable sources, check the PBH Web site at www.5aday.com

Some "green" ideas for St. Patrick's Day (or any day) include:

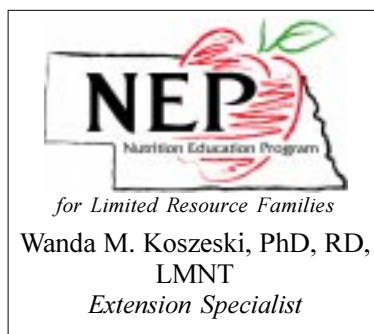
- Eat a tossed **lettuce** salad. Add extra green with green peppers if you like!
- Enjoy cabbage in cole slaw.
- Corned beef with **cabbage** is a natural for St. Patrick's Day!
- Include some **kiwi fruit** in your fruit salad.
- Throw some frozen **peas** into a soup.
- Add **avocado** slices to salads

and sandwiches. To maintain avocados' green color, eat them immediately or sprinkle them with lemon or lime juice. Though 2 tablespoons of avocado have about 5 grams of fat, it's mostly heart-healthy monounsaturated fat.

• Enjoy your favorite dip in combination with **broccoli** florets and other vegetables.

So, this month and beyond, start thinking **GREEN**. Here are some more ideas graciously shared by Jan Patenaude, RD: Spinach noodles (topping of choice); spinach souffle; spinach, asparagus and/or green pepper omelets with parsley garnish; pesto on anything; cream of broccoli or spinach soups; finely diced spinach in any chicken noodle/rice/orzo soups; glazed kiwi over a sponge/angel food base. (AH)

Oh Those Darn Portion Sizes!



Recently I did a presentation to 300 high school students on making healthy food choices. While preparing for this, I found some interesting statistics on portion sizes versus serving sizes. You may say that this inspired my latest column.

Let us first determine what a serving size is and what a portion size is. A serving is a standard amount used to help give advice about how much to eat, or to identify how many calories and nutrients are in a food. A portion is the amount of food you choose to eat. There is no standard portion size and no single right or wrong portion size.

The reason some researchers speculate our waistlines are

getting bigger is because our portion sizes are getting bigger. They are calling this portion distortion. For example, a bagel in 1980 was equal to two servings from the Food Guide Pyramid grain group. A bagel today is equal to almost four servings yet we would call that one portion. A 12-ounce steak is equal to four servings from the Meat and Bean Group.

Here are some tips to get your portion distortion back into focus.

- Choose a small or medium portion.
- Choose water as a beverage over pop.
- Share a meal with a friend.
- If the serving is too big, ask for a take home box and take half the meal home.
- You don't have to clean your plate.
- Ask for salad dressings and sauces to be on the side.
- Watch those all-you-can-eat buffets.
- Try measuring your typical portion sizes at home to get an idea how many servings from the Food Guide Pyramid you

are getting.

- Watch your fun foods. The reason they are fun is you are not supposed to eat them everyday. Fun foods are like cookies, desserts, cakes, etc.
- Use a smaller plate for your meals.
- Watch out for those value meals. Are they really a value? In a recent article from the American Cancer Institute they compared cost of calories and price. They found moving from a small to medium bag of movie theater unbuttered popcorn costs about 71 cents and 500 calories. That is a 23 percent increase in price but provides 125 percent more calories and two days worth of saturated fat. It costs 8 cents more to purchase a McDonald's Quarter Pounder with cheese, small fries and small pop (890 calories) separately than to buy the Quarter Pounder with Cheese large Extra Value Meal which is 1380 calories. Just something to think about. What are you really saving and what are the true cost?

Tea Time! — Brewing a Tasty (& Healthy!) Cup of Tea

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Sipping on a cup of tea can be a comforting (and healthy!) practice. Tea, both black and green, contains antioxidants that may, among other things, help protect against cancer and heart disease. While tea is not recommended as a replacement for fruit and vegetables, tea's antioxidant activity has been compared to that of fruit and vegetables in a number of studies.

Now is a great time to enjoy a hot and healthy cup of tea. If you've been making tea that tastes like lukewarm dishwasher, some of these suggestions may help you.

1. Start with Fresh Cold Water

Use fresh cold water rather than hot tap water or water that has already been heated for making your tea. Hot tap water and reheated water have less oxygen and give a "flatter" flavor. Let the water run from the tap for a few seconds to incorporate more oxygen. Unless the directions for your tea state otherwise, heat about 8-ounces of water for each cup of tea you plan to make.

TIP: Use bottled or filtered water if your regular tap water has an unpleasant flavor.

2. Preheat Teapot or Cup

While waiting for your water to heat, preheat the teapot or cup in which your tea bag(s) or loose tea will be steeped by filling it with hot water. It's OK to use hot tap water for preheating. If the heated water for your

tea is poured into a cold teapot or cup, the water temperature may drop several degrees and decrease the flavor extraction from the tea.

TIP: If steeping tea directly in a cup, you may wish to cover the cup both while warming it with hot water and while the tea is brewing to retain the heat. Your saucer is a possibility for a cover. You also can purchase tea mugs with lids.

3. Use Correct Amount of Water and Tea

As a general guideline, use about 1 tea bag or 1 teaspoon of loose tea per 8-ounce cup of tea. Check package directions. If your tea is too strong, add more hot water after your tea has brewed. If your tea is too weak, either use more tea or less water the next time you make tea.

4. Brew at Correct Time/Temperature

Follow the directions that come with your tea for the recommended brewing time and temperature.

Generally, for **black** teas — bring the water to a rolling boil. Immediately pour the boiling water over the tea. Allow black tea to steep for 3 to 5 minutes.

For **green** tea, which is more delicate than black tea, use water that is about 160 to 180 degrees F or just below boiling. At this temperature, you will see some steam rise from the water. This lower temperature helps protect against a bitter or astringent taste in green tea. Brew green tea for about 3 minutes, or as directed on the package. **TIP:** If heating your water for green tea in a whistling tea kettle, flip back or remove the whistle section so you can

see when steam starts rising from the spout.

TIP: Avoid letting tea over steep — this also can make it bitter. It may be helpful to use a timer in brewing your tea — the color of the tea isn't necessarily an indicator of the tea's taste.

5. Don't Overcrowd Loose Tea

If you use loose tea leaves rather than tea bags, your tea will taste best if the leaves have some room to expand. Place the tea leaves directly into a teapot and strain the brewed tea with a fine mesh strainer into your cups. Or use a basket infuser or a large tea ball in your teapot or cup. A tea ball or basket infuser should be filled no more than half full with tea so the leaves have room to expand for the best flavor.