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Beans, of all varieties, are a natural and tasty addition to salads. These salads are substantial enough to serve as a light main dish.

Southwestern Black Bean Salad

(Makes 4 main-dish servings)

- ½ cup light ranch dressing
- 1 large tomato, cut into bite-size wedges
- 1 (15-ounce) can black beans, drained and rinsed
- 1 cup frozen corn, thawed
- 1 red bell pepper, chopped or cut into strips
- 1 shallot, chopped, OR 4 green onions (including stem), sliced
- 1 package (5-ounces) salad greens
- 1 cup sharp cheddar cheese, regular or reduced fat, coarsely shredded
- Black pepper, to taste

1. In a large bowl, combine all salad ingredients (EXCEPT cheese and black pepper).
2. Divide between large salad plates and top with cheese. Pass black pepper, preferably in a pepper grinder, so people can grind their own.

Three Bean Pasta

(Serves 4-6)

- 1 pound medium or wide egg noodles*, uncooked
- 1 15-ounce can kidney beans, rinsed and drained
- 1 15-ounce can chickpeas, rinsed and drained
- 1 cup frozen green beans, thawed
- 1 small red onion, chopped
- 1 red bell pepper, seeds and ribs removed, chopped
- 3 tablespoons Dijon mustard
- 2 tablespoons vegetable oil
- 3 tablespoons red wine vinegar
- 3 tablespoons chopped fresh parsley

1. Prepare pasta according to package directions; drain. Rinse under cold water and drain again.
2. In a large bowl, stir together the pasta, kidney beans, chickpeas, green beans, onion and bell pepper. In a small bowl, stir together the remaining ingredients.
3. Toss pasta with dressing and serve.



Photo from www.ilovepasta.org

*According to the National Pasta Organization, one pound of dry noodles will produce a cooked amount of 5 cups. Other pasta shapes may be substituted for 1 pound of noodles — however a different amount (about 10 ounces) is needed as one pound of macaroni, spaghetti, penne, etc. equals 8 cups cooked volume.

NUTRITION FACTS PER SERVING: calories, 374; protein, 14.7 g; carbohydrates, 59.6 g; fat, 9.3 g; cholesterol, 0 mg
SOURCE: Recipe courtesy of National Pasta Organization. For more information about pasta, visit <http://www.ilovepasta.org>.

Making Super Salads from MyPyramid Food Groups

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What could be simpler in the summer time (or anytime) than a main dish salad. With a little planning, it's even possible to include all of the recommended MyPyramid Food Groups in your salad, especially if you count avocados as FRUITS! Following are 14 tips to help you get the most from your summer salads, without heating up your kitchen. See how many of these MyPyramid food groups you can include:

- Vegetables
- Fruits
- Milk
- Meat & Bean
- Grain

Go easy on the salad dressing (about 1 to 1½ tablespoons per 2 cups of salad) to keep calories in check.

Go on the Dark Side with Salad Greens

Choose darker-colored salad greens to add extra color and nutrition to salads. A salad spinner makes quick work of drying salad greens.



Use Your Bean(s)

Keep a couple cans of cooked dry beans in your cupboard for quick and easy main dish summer salads. Cooked dry beans can count in either the Meat & Bean or the Vegetable group. (See recipe for the Southwestern Black Bean Salad at left.)



Pasta Possibilities

Make a double batch of pasta so you only have to heat up the stove once. To use pasta in a cold salad, the National Pasta Association says "drain, rinse with COLD water and

immediately drain again. Then proceed to prepare your dish." (See recipe for "Three Bean Pasta" at left.)

NPA advises, "Refrigerate cooked pasta in an airtight container for 3-5 days. You may add a little oil (1-2 teaspoons for each pound of cooked pasta) to help keep it from sticking."

A Nutty Idea

Almonds (sliced, slivered or whole), walnuts, pecans sesame seeds and sunflower seeds can kick up the taste of your salad. Nuts are in the Meat & Bean food group.



Say Cheese!

Add flavor and bone-building calcium from the milk group! If your experience with Parmesan cheese is limited to shaking it from a can, try using a vegetable peeler to shave about a tablespoon per serving from a block of cheese. Or, sprinkle freshly grated Parmesan on salads.

An EGG-cellent Idea

Hard-cook several eggs at one time and use in salads throughout the week. Hard-cooked eggs in the shell can be kept in the refrigerator for up to one week. MyPyramid counts one egg as equivalent to one ounce of meat in the Meat & Beans Group.



Fantastic Fresh Fruit

Fruits make colorful and healthy additions to salads. Keep cut fruits such as apples and pears, from turning brown by coating them with an acidic juice such as lemon, orange or pineapple juice. Or use a commercial anti-darkening preparation with fruits, such as Ever-Fresh™ or Fruit-Fresh®, and follow the manufacturer's directions.

Cut fruits as close to serving time as possible. Cover and refrigerate cut fruit until ready to serve. Avoid leaving cut fruit at room temperature for more than two hours.

Dandy Dried Fruit

Dried fruits, such as cranberries, blueberries, cherries and raisins add texture, sweetness and healthy antioxidants, too!

All Aboard for Avocados!

Avocados provide heart-healthy mono-unsaturated fat — did you know they're considered a fruit?

Ripen avocados by placing them in a plain brown paper bag and storing them at room temperature. It will take about 2 to 5 days until they're ready to eat.

Get Grilling

Add sliced, grilled meat to your salads. Quickly cook meat indoors without turning on the stove by using a double-sided grill. While the meat is cooking, assemble your salad. Slice and toss in the meat when done.

Peas, Please!

Fresh or thawed frozen peas (and corn) add extra color and nutrition to salads.

Quickly thaw frozen peas and corn by placing them in a colander and holding under cool running water for 30 seconds or until thawed. Drain thoroughly.



Pep It Up with Peppers

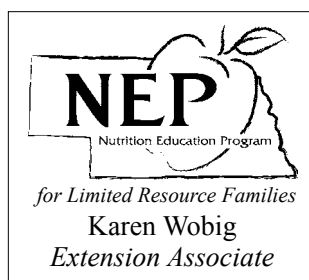
Add strips of peppers — red, green, yellow, etc. — for color and crunch.

Add Crunch with Croutons

Whole grain croutons add both flavor and fiber.



Make Eating Fruits and Vegetables Fun for Youth



Learning about the importance of fruits and vegetables in one's diet should start at an early age. If children grow up eating these kinds of foods, they are more likely to continue doing so in their adult life. The new MyPyramid recommends school-age children eat about 3 cups of fruits and vegetables

(combined) each day.

Through the Nutrition Education Program school enrichment project, fourth graders in Lincoln learn about the importance of having fruits and vegetables in their diet. Pre- and post-testing is done to determine if they know how much they should be consuming each day. During one school year, prior to the nutrition education, only 33 percent of the students knew how many fruits and vegetables to eat everyday. At the conclusion, 82 percent of the students knew. This data shows teaching children about dietary guidelines

can have a positive impact.

Adults have a great influence on children's eating habits. Since vegetables are sometimes a food children won't eat, talking about their importance and offering them are important ways to promote eating them. Try the following recipe for a fun way to encourage eating vegetables.

Not only can making this recipe be a fun, family activity, but the children actually prepare it AND eat vegetables too! This recipe can also be prepared using fruits alone or along with the vegetables.

Monster Salad

- Leaf lettuce
- ¼ to ½ cup cottage cheese
- Selection of fresh, raw vegetables such as cherry tomatoes; green, yellow or red peppers; broccoli; zucchini slices; peas; beans; baby carrots; celery

1. Wash hands.
2. Wash vegetables.
3. Place lettuce leaf on plate.
4. Put cottage cheese on lettuce and slightly spread.
5. Using a variety of vegetables, let children design their "monster."
6. Eat the salad with a fork, or use vegetable pieces to scoop up the cottage cheese.

