

Cover Page – Nutrition Posts

Each week, I created a new post for Bekah's Bites that included a series on the value of eating fruits and vegetables called "eat the rainbow."

These posts detailed nutrition tips about colorful fruits and vegetables and encouraged readers to "think about rainbow colors when you choose your produce because those bright shades not only mean better flavor, it means they contain healthy nutrients."

The posts consisted of a nutrition tip, a blog post about the fruit or vegetable and a recipe.

Blueberries 09132016

Cooking tip

You probably have a ton of blueberries since late summer is the height of blueberry season. You will need to freeze the berries as soon as you get them. Either rinse (be sure to pat dry) immediately or simply put them in plastic bags and rinse them just before you use them. These will keep for 6 months so you have plenty of time to enjoy a taste of summer when snow's on the ground!

Blog

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Blueberries

Harvesting and preserving blueberries began in America but soon the world knew of their great qualities. This tiny indigo berry originated in North America where Native Americans referred to it as "[star fruit](#)" because of the five points on a blueberry blossom. Even though its roots are in America, the berry struck out for Europe in the 1930s where it made a social call to Germany, Sweden and the Netherlands. From there its reputation for being supremely delicious and healthy spread throughout Europe and into Asia then further to South America and Australia. Blueberries are cousins to the cranberry and distantly related to the azalea bush (but don't try the azaleas in a smoothie!).

This dark purple fruit can be frozen, dried or preserved easily and still retain many of its healthful benefits. Recognized by its dusky blue pigment, this coloring indicates a high level of antioxidants which blueberries have more of than any other fruit or vegetable. At 80 calories per cup, it's a good choice to help with the prevention of cancer, heart disease and Alzheimer's. Blueberries are high in Vitamin C and are fiber-rich. Other exceptional health boosts provided by this tiny berry are:

- Lowers blood pressure
- Reduces heart attack risk
- Increases brain function
- Controls blood sugar
- Protects against memory loss

Blueberries have been a staple in North American diets for centuries because of their wonderful taste and only recently due to their exceptional health benefits. You can enjoy them for breakfast (in a smoothie or muffin) or as a dessert (blueberry cobbler or flavorful sorbet) but they also provide a great compliment to leafy greens. Get ready to prepare your Easy Friday Lunch using this delicious power-packed fruit.

Resources:

<http://www.onegreenplanet.org/natural-health/why-you-should-be-eating-more-blueberries-and-raspberries/>

<http://www.blueberrycouncil.org/blueberry-recipes/>

http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2014/07/12/blueberry-health-facts-benefits_n_5568690.html

<http://www.2020site.org/fun-facts/Blueberry-Fun-Facts.html>

<http://www.fooducate.com/app#!page=post&id=53C6D001-3993-CEFE-4ABC-A9171704C26A>

Easy Friday Lunch

Grilled Chicken and Blueberry Salad

Total Time - 30 min

Ingredients

- 1 cups mixed greens
- ½ cup blueberries
- ¼ cup slivered almonds
- ½ cup cubed chicken breasts, cooked

Dressing

- ¼ cup olive oil
- ¼ cup apple cider vinegar
- ¼ cup blueberries
- 2 tbsp honey
- Salt and pepper to taste

Directions

- In a large bowl, toss the greens, blueberries, almonds, and chicken breasts until well mixed.
- For the salad dressing, combine the olive oil, apple cider vinegar, blueberries, and honey in a blender. Blend until smooth. (Note: Dressing will make enough for 4 servings)
- Add salt and pepper to taste.

Source: <http://skinnymys.com/grilled-chicken-and-blueberry-salad/>

Kale - 09062016

Cooking tip

You've bought one of the healthiest greens available! Now to make the best of it, use these four great tips to make kale taste its best: 1) wash just prior to cooking to keep it fresh longer, 2) remove the thick stems in the middle by holding the stem and removing leaves, 3) blanch the greens to reduce bitterness and 4) slow cook (or braise) kale in water or broth to tenderize the leaves

Blog

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Kale

Any way you want to cook or eat kale, this vegetable packs a punch of nutrition. In recent years, kale has been at the center of a great PR campaign but as it turns out, its popularity isn't a recent thing. During World War II, this vegetable was a recommended plant for Victory Gardens since it provided nutrients that the American diet was missing due to rationing.

Kale is a cousin of wild cabbage and this vegetable was the most common green leafy in Europe. However, kale's origins go back to Ancient Greece where the forest green veggie was flat-leaved, not its curly, darker counterpart seen today. Trade with Russia in the 19th century brought kale to North America and it became popular because it could be grown well into winter.

Some very important vitamins and minerals are packed into the 33 calories in one cup of kale such as Vitamins A, K, C and calcium. This dark green leafy has become well known for reducing inflammation and is full of antioxidants, all leading to lowering cancer risk. Fiber and protein can also be listed among this green vegetable's good qualities. Other nutritional benefits are:

- Improves and protects eye site
- Reduces cholesterol
- Aids in digestion of fats
- Helps with weight loss

Kale may still have a good public relations team now but it will be on the top of everyone's healthy shopping list for a long while. Check out the delicious, and nutritious, Easy Friday Lunch including this week's most popular super food vegetable.

Resources:

<https://experiencelife.com/article/how-to-cook-kale/>

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kale>

<https://authoritynutrition.com/50-super-healthy-foods/>

<https://authoritynutrition.com/10-proven-benefits-of-kale/>

Easy Friday Lunch

Sausage and Mushroom Penne with Kale

Total Time - 30 min

(This recipe serves 6 so save the left overs for quick lunches over the weekend!)

Ingredients

- 1 lb. multigrain penne
- 12 oz. sweet Italian sausage
- 1 medium onion
- 2 package mushrooms
- 5 oz. baby kale
- ¼ tsp. salt
- ½ tsp. pepper
- ⅓ c. freshly grated Parmesan cheese

Directions

1. Heat large covered saucepot of salted water to boiling on high. Cook pasta as label directs. Reserve 1/4 cup pasta cooking water.
2. Meanwhile, heat 12-inch skillet on medium-high until hot. Add sausage; cook 5 minutes or until browned, stirring and breaking up meat. Add onion; cook 4 minutes or until browned, stirring. (If pan begins to scorch, add 1/4 cup water.) Stir in mushrooms; cook 8 minutes or until softened, stirring often.
3. Drain pasta; return to pot. Add kale, sausage mixture, reserved pasta water, 1/4 teaspoon salt, and 1/2 teaspoon black pepper. Toss on medium-low until well mixed. Top with Parmesan.

Source: <http://www.goodhousekeeping.com/food-recipes/a13764/sausage-mushroom-penne-recipe-ghk1012/>

Kiwi – 8/30/2016

Cooking tip

Getting juicy green fruit from a kiwi can be tricky but try this tip!

Peel a kiwi fruit by cutting off both ends then insert a large spoon between the skin and the fruit. Move the spoon inside the skin and around the fruit, and then pop out the green midsection. Now the kiwi is ready to eat without the fuzzy outer layer!

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Kiwi

The juicy, green fruit of the kiwi, though a little tricky to pull away from the skin, makes a great addition to sweet or savory dishes, dressings and mixed drinks or smoothies. It is one of the most versatile and nutrient-rich fruits to grace your table.

Not only is this tiny green fruit an international traveler but it went through a name change during its world tour! The story of its name begins with a bird – the kiwi, in fact. *Kiwifruit* being the super delicious green and black seed-speckled fruit was named for its *similarity* to New Zealand's national bird (which is small, brown and fuzzy, too). Kiwifruit began life known as the Chinese Gooseberry and resided in northern China. Later missionaries introduced the tropical lime green fruit to New Zealand. The island was able farm then export these "berries" but not without a serious name change. Due the high taxes placed on berries leaving the country, the former berry became known as a kiwi or kiwifruit after its resemblance to its namesake.

This little oval fruit has around 61 calories and boasts five times more Vitamin C than an orange. It also adds a healthy dose of Vitamin K (1 cup = 90% of daily allowance!) to your diet. Along with Vitamins A, B and E, this tiny powerhouse fruit contains potassium, lots of fiber and omega-3 fatty acids. These nutrients benefit you by:

- Being an immune booster
- Helping blood clot after a cut or scrape
- Improving skin, bone and tooth health
- Balancing electrolytes to help with blood pressure
- Keeping your system running smoothly
- Reducing inflammation and heart disease risk

Such a fun name for such a nutritionally dense fruit! Check out the Easy Friday Lunch that includes fiber rich black beans and a kiwi salsa to add some kick to your lunch and give you energy to start your weekend!

Resources:

<http://www.whfoods.com/genpage.php?tname=foodspice&dbid=41>

<http://www.alwaysorderdessert.com/2009/11/how-to-peel-kiwi-video-tutorial.html>

<http://www.medicalnewstoday.com/articles/271232.php>

<http://www.healthsomeness.com/smoothie-recipes/k-for-kiwifruit/>

<http://foodfacts.mercola.com/kiwi.html>

Easy Friday Lunch

Black Bean Tostadas with Kiwifruit Salsa

Total Time - 30 min

(This recipe serves 4 so save the left overs for quick lunches over the weekend!)

- ½ cup chopped white onion, plus ⅓ cup minced white onion, divided
- 1 Tbs. lime juice
- ¼ tsp. salt
- 3 medium kiwifruit, peeled and diced
- ½ cup coarsely chopped cilantro
- 1 Tbs. finely chopped jalapeño chile
- 3 dried New Mexico chiles, seeded and cut into small pieces (or use *chili powder*)
- 2 tsp. olive oil
- 1 15-oz. can black beans, drained, liquid reserved
- 4 baked tostada shells
- 1 cup plain nonfat Greek yogurt

1. Toss together chopped onion, lime juice, and salt in bowl. Let stand 15 minutes, stirring occasionally. Stir in kiwifruit, cilantro, and jalapeño.

2. Grind dried chiles to fine particles (like sugar) in spice mill or coffee grinder; set aside. **NOTE: Chili powder can be substituted but the spicy taste will vary)**

3. Heat oil in nonstick skillet over medium heat. Add minced onion, cover, and cook 5 minutes, or until softened, stirring occasionally. Add beans, ½ cup reserved bean liquid, and 2½ tsp. ground chiles. Mash

beans, leaving some whole for texture. Cook 5 minutes, or until mixture is thickened, but moist, stirring often.

4. Place 1 tostada shell on each plate. Divide bean mixture among tostadas, leaving ½-inch border. Top each with 1/4 cup yogurt and 1/4 cup salsa; dust with ground chiles (*or powder*). Serve with remaining salsa.

Source: <http://www.vegetariantimes.com/recipe/black-bean-tostadas-with-kiwifruit-salsa/>

Lemons – 8/16/2016

Cooking tip

Add lemon to your water to boost your Vitamin C which will help inflammation, aid in digestion and add energy. It also makes the water taste wonderful – so you'll drink more of it! Add some ice and lemon slices and you have spa treatment in a glass.

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Lemons

Aside from making your water taste wonderful, lemons can be used in so many different ways to improve your health and well-being. This bright, yellow fruit is quite a chameleon in the culinary world as it shows up as a condiment and flavor enhancer (think grilled salmon!), in main dishes (Chicken Piccata) and most notably in desserts (lemon meringue pie). Not only do lemons play well with all types of fruits, vegetables and meats but they aid in digestion. So eat lemons any way you like!

Lemons are thought to have had their start in India but this exceptional fruit soon made its way to Europe by way of Italy (lemon gelato, anyone?) in the mid-15th century. Italian explorer, Christopher Columbus brought lemon seeds to the Americas and the fruit became widely farmed in Florida and California by the 19th century.

This bright, flavorful fruit contains not only high levels of Vitamin C but also pectin (most famous for making jellies gel) which is a good source of fiber. By acting as a digestive aid, pectin slows the rate of sugar absorption therefore blood sugar is more stable and this may help with weight loss. Lemons have additional nutrients including potassium, B vitamins and calcium and other benefits include:

- Detoxifying the liver and kidneys by flushing stored water (no more bloat!)
- Lowering cholesterol and high blood pressure
- Improving skin health
- Boosting mood and increasing concentration (try lemon-scented oils!)
- Aiding in iron absorption

Such a small fruit packs such a large amount of nutrients and with all those great qualities - lemons should be part of your daily diet. Jumpstart your day and your digestion with lemon juice in your water then check back here for this week's Easy Friday Lunch which will include a burst of flavor from your new favorite fruit!

Resources:

<https://draxe.com/benefits-of-lemon-water/>

<http://www.lifehack.org/articles/lifestyle/16-benefits-lemon-you-may-not-know-about.html>

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lemon>

<https://authoritynutrition.com/foods/lemons/>

<https://draxe.com/pectin/>

Easy Friday Lunch

Lemon Garlic Spaghetti with Sundried Tomatoes

Total Time - 30 min

Ingredients

- 4 oz of spaghetti
- 4 sundried tomatoes, chopped
- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 2 teaspoons parsley, chopped (or herb of your choice)
- 1 clove garlic, crushed
- 2 tbsp lemon juice
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1 teaspoon pepper

Instructions

- Prepare pasta as per instructions on the box in a large pot of water. Drain pasta.
- Heat olive oil and garlic in a large pan over medium-high heat, until garlic is cooked slightly for about 2 minutes, stirring constantly
- Ensure all your ingredients are nearby.
- Toss the pasta in the olive oil to coat, then immediately add the salt, pepper and lemon juice.
- Toss the pasta until all ingredients are mixed and turn off heat (you don't want to dry out the pasta).
- Add the sundried tomatoes in the pan and toss again.
- Add the parsley or herb of your choice on top.
- Serve immediately, or if reheating, microwave with a little bit of water in the bowl.

Resource: <http://jessicainthekitchen.com/lemon-garlic-spaghetti/>

Mango – 08/02/2016

Cooking tip

Mangos are a clingstone fruit (where the seed clings to the meat of the fruit) and they require a special slicing method so for convenience buy pre-cut or frozen.

Blog

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Mangos

Decide if you want to use fresh pre-cut or frozen mangos and look for recipes to add a burst of orange color to your healthy diet.

Mangos are the national fruit of India, Pakistan and the Philippines but are a native of South Asia and commonly grown in tropical climates. Since mangos are a fragile fruit, their cultivation in Florida and California has been limited, most of the produce we use in the U.S. comes from Mexico and Central America. Even though this fruit is grown and harvested in hot climates, it is known to have cooling properties for the body (mango ice cream anyone?).

As with most tropical fruits, mangos have a lot of Vitamin C and a one cup serving (about 100 calories) also contains 35% of Vitamin A which is an antioxidant and aids with vision. Around 10% of probiotic fiber can be found in this orange fruit. Nutrients such as copper and magnesium, which provide enzymes, and potassium to balance sodium, share their health benefits with Vitamin B for energy. The juicy orange center of this fruit also benefits a healthy diet by:

- Lowering cholesterol
- Improving skin
- Promoting eye health
- Alkalizing the body (reducing acidity and inflammation)
- Improving digestion
- Boosting immune system

Sharing a basket of mangos is considered a gesture of friendship so make friends with your diet and add this wonderful fruit. Look for our Easy Friday Lunch post featuring a great chicken recipe enhanced with mangos to cool you off during the heat of midday!

Resources:

<http://www.care2.com/greenliving/10-health-benefits-of-mangos.html>

<https://healthimpactnews.com/2013/17-reasons-why-you-need-a-mango-every-day/>

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mango>

Easy Friday Lunch

Orange Mango Chicken

Ingredients

40 minutes - 1 serving - 287 calories

2-1/4 teaspoons olive oil
1 skinless, boneless chicken breast halves
1/8 teaspoon ground thyme
Salt and add freshly ground black pepper to taste
1/4 lemon, juiced
1/4 cup orange juice
1/4 mango - peeled, seeded, and sliced
1/8 teaspoon ground ginger
1/8 teaspoon ground cinnamon

Directions

Heat the olive oil in a medium skillet over medium heat.

Place chicken breast in the skillet, and cook 5 to 10 minutes on each side, until no longer pink and juices run clear.

Season both sides with thyme, salt, and pepper.

Remove from heat, and set aside.

Heat the lemon juice in the skillet over medium heat, and scrape up browned bits.

Mix in orange juice, mango, ginger, and cinnamon.

Over high heat, cook and continuously stir 4 to 5 minutes, until thickened.

Spoon over the cooked chicken breast halves to serve.

Source: allrecipes.com

Radishes – 07/26/2016

Cooking tip

Be sure to buy small radishes, larger sizes tend to be hollow or spongy. Once purchased, wash them well and store them in a plastic baggies with a paper towel at the bottom, this will keep them fresh for about a week.

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Radishes

Pull this colorful red vegetable from storage and get them ready use them in your healthy recipes!

The small root vegetable we all find so familiar today is quite a world traveler with several varieties appearing in India, China and Asia. The ones we see most often were cultivated by Greek and Roman agriculturalists then found their way to Europe and are commonly known as the European Radish. Being quite hardy, this cold weather vegetable is fast growing and is easily harvested with few issues with soil or pests. Which is great for us because this root's robustness adds so many health benefits to our diets!

3.5 ounces (or almost half a cup) has 16 calories and can provide 25% of the daily recommended value of Vitamin C. Other nutrients packed into this tiny root vegetable range from iron and potassium to vitamins A, B and calcium. Radishes contain fiber which helps in maintaining a healthy weight. Paired with the fiber, radishes are also natural diuretics and both together will keep your digestive system functioning properly. This mild, peppery vegetable also has a high water content, eases inflammation and provides a cooling effect to the body. Other benefits include:

- Cell repair and productions
- Controls blood sugar
- Reduces cholesterol
- Relieves congestion and help with respiratory issues
- Assist with liver function

A tiny vegetable that packs so many nutrients certainly needs to be added to your grocery list! Look for our Friday Lunch recipe featuring an easy radish slaw that will go with all of your favorite sandwiches.

Resources:

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Radish>

<http://www.happydieter.net/health-benefits-of-radish/>

<http://foodfacts.mercola.com/radish.html>

Easy Friday Lunch – 1

Mexican Radish Slaw

Toss together:

- 1 head shredded cabbage
- 1 bunch thinly sliced radishes with 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 1 teaspoon salt
- Juice of 1/2 lime

Let sit 15 minutes.

Just before serving, if desired, toss with 1 small bunch chopped cilantro or 1 to 2 thinly sliced jalapenos.

Pair with a turkey, grilled chicken, or bbq sandwich of your choice or add to tacos.

Source: [The Food Network](#)

Squash – 8/23/2016

Cooking tip

Use herbs to get the most flavor out of this season's prettiest yellow vegetable – summer squash! For grilling sprinkle on dill and oregano then use rosemary and basil when sautéing or making stews.

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Squash

You know its summer when you see this bright yellow vegetable in your garden, farmer's market or grocery! Thriving in mild weather, but at its peak during the summer, this yellow squash is known by a few names: straightneck squash, yellow summer squash and most often, yellow squash. Believed to have originated in North America, yellow summer squash is a relative of zucchini and pumpkin and is often interchangeable in recipes with its green similarly sized cousin. Summer squash's versatility made it a favorite of Columbus and even won the vegetable a trip to Spain where it began a world tour and later became included in the cuisines of various countries on the Spanish trading routes.

Yellow squash weighs in at around 18 calories a cup and pairs well with meats, fish or grains. This vegetable contains a sizeable portion of carbohydrates and fiber both of which get you closer to the recommended daily servings for a healthy diet. With a huge antioxidant and mineral boost, squash is a good source of Vitamin C, beta carotene, Vitamin B and manganese that help to:

- Slow aging and regenerate cells (feeling younger already!)
- Decrease risk of heart disease and cancer
- Prevent anemia
- Reduce inflammation and arthritis
- Improve vision
- Maintain healthy brain and nerve functions

Whether you like this brilliantly colored summer vegetable on the grill, in a stew, sautéed or steamed, eating it can enhance not only your meal but also your health. Add in some seasonal herbs and enjoy the nutrition and flavor boosts. Check out our Easy Friday Lunch and get you ready for the easiest steaming recipe of the summer!

Resources:

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Straightneck_squash

<http://www.livestrong.com/article/349229-the-nutritional-value-of-yellow-squash/>

<http://www.whfoods.com/genpage.php?tname=foodspice&dbid=62>

Easy Friday Lunch

Pasta with White Beans and Summer Squash

Ingredients:

- 1/2 pound small whole-wheat pasta (bowtie, fusilli or penne)
- 4 small yellow squash, halved lengthwise and thinly sliced (zucchini can be added, too)
- 3/4 cup feta cheese crumbles
- 1/4 cup Greek or Italian dressing
- 1 (15-ounce) can cannellini beans, rinsed and drained

Directions:

- Bring a large pot of water to a boil.
- Add pasta and cook until just al dente, 8 to 10 minutes.
- Meanwhile, arrange squash in the bottom of a large colander.
- To drain, pour pasta and its water over vegetables and let sit for 2 to 3 minutes.
- Transfer contents of colander to a large bowl, add cheese, dressing and beans and toss well.
- Serve warm or cold.

Resource: <http://www.wholefoodsmarket.com/recipe/pasta-white-beans-and-summer-squash>

Strawberries – 07/19/2016

Cooking tip

Buy organic strawberries when you can. Strawberries are part of the “[dirty dozen](#)” list and commercially grown fruits may have a lot of pesticides. You can also buy from your local Farmer’s Market and ask how the strawberries were farmed.

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Strawberries!

After buying your strawberries either from a local Farmer’s Market or at an organic grocery store, you can start to enjoy the many benefits of this amazing fruit.

The same strawberries that help us celebrate summer (and Valentine’s Day!) were brought from the wild and into the garden in France in the 18th century. Strawberries were initially cultivated for their various medicinal uses; however, they grew in popularity because of the wonderful taste. Who doesn’t love strawberry shortcake and whipped cream?

One serving of strawberries has around 50 calories and is an excellent source of Vitamin C. Low in sugar but definitely sweet enough to curb any cravings, this fruit is a healthy snack because it reduces blood sugar spikes. Strawberries have such vital nutrients as B-complex, manganese, fiber and a healthy plant compound called ellagic acid, which may reduce cancer risk. These may be reason enough to eat as much as you can of this summer harvested fruit, but strawberries also:

- Boost immunity
- Promote eye health
- Ease inflammation and prevent collagen destruction
- Fight bad cholesterol and regulate blood pressure
- Help with weight management

With so many good qualities, this fruit is a staple in any healthy diet. Check us out tomorrow and see how to make an easy Friday lunch with strawberries.

Resources:

<http://www.fitnessrxwomen.com/nutrition/healthy-eating-tips/10-health-benefits-of-strawberries/>

Easy Friday Lunch – 1 (see -2 below)

Yield: Serves 2

[Recipe from Cooking Light](#)

Nutritional Information

Calories 399

Fat 22.2 g

Protein 31 g

Carbohydrate 22 g

Ingredients

4 teaspoons extra-virgin olive oil, divided
1 tablespoon white balsamic vinegar
1 teaspoon honey
1/2 teaspoon chopped fresh thyme
3/8 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper, divided
1/4 teaspoon kosher salt, divided
2 cups halved strawberries, divided
2 (4-ounce) skinless, boneless chicken breast cutlets
1/4 teaspoon smoked paprika
4 cups fresh baby spinach
1/4 cup thinly sliced red onion
3 tablespoons chopped pecans, toasted
1 ounce reduced-fat feta cheese, crumbled (about 1/4 cup)

Preparation

1. Combine 1 tablespoon oil, vinegar, honey, thyme, 1/4 teaspoon pepper, and 1/8 teaspoon salt in a medium bowl; stir with a whisk. Add 1 cup strawberries, tossing to coat. Let stand at room temperature 10 minutes.
2. Heat a medium skillet over medium-high heat. Brush chicken with remaining 1 teaspoon oil; sprinkle evenly with remaining 1/8 teaspoon pepper, salt, and paprika. Coat pan with cooking spray. Add chicken to pan; cook 2 to 3 minutes on each side or until done. Remove chicken from pan; let stand 5 minutes. Cut across the grain into slices.
3. Divide spinach, remaining 1 cup strawberries, and onion between 2 plates. Top evenly with chicken slices and strawberry-balsamic mixture. Top each serving with 1 1/2 tablespoons pecans and 2 tablespoons cheese.

Easy Friday Lunch – 2

It's summer. It's hot. And there are lots of fresh fruits! Make something cool without heating up the kitchen.

- 2 slices of whole wheat bread
- ½ thinly sliced strawberries
- 2 tbsp. of nut butter (almond, cashew or peanut)

Use sliced apple or pears as your side.

Source: <http://news.health.com/2015/09/30/3-ways-to-make-a-grown-up-pbj/>

Sweet Potatoes – 8/9/2016

Cooking tip

Know the best way to get all those nutrients from a sweet potato? Bake? Fry? You guess it, they need to be boiled! This method brings out more vitamins and minerals and lowers the glycemic index (which means these veggies will not mess with your blood sugar levels!) Healthy soup, anyone?

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Sweet Potatoes

You are probably most familiar with those sweet potato casseroles that show up during the holidays smothered with butter, sugar and nuts, well, there are many healthier ways to enjoy this vegetable powerhouse.

Sweet potatoes began their history in South America and were traded with the inhabitants of the Polynesian Islands. The vegetable thrived in the islands due to it being a reliable crop that would survive hurricane season. From there this vegetable traveled into Japan, Asia and New Zealand and become a staple in the cuisines of those areas. The orange-centered tuber then migrated from South America north into the United States in the mid-20th century. However, this nutrient-rich vegetable fell out of favor during the 20th century, new information about the vitamins and mineral it provides along with the popularity of certain eating plans has brought it back into the mainstream. It was even awarded [The World Food Prize in 2016](#) because of its high nutrition value!

With a bright orange color, sweet potatoes are best known for Vitamin A (in the form of beta carotene) and potassium. These tubers rival carrots for Vitamin A and bananas for having the most potassium. This super food packs nutrients which help to:

- Improve vision
- Strengthen the immune system
- Provide antioxidants for healthy skin
- Increase muscle strength

The holidays are just around the corner, but you don't have to wait until then to enjoy this nutrient packed orange vegetable! Check back here and get ready to pick out some sweet potatoes for your Easy Friday Lunch!

Resources:

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sweet_potato

<http://www.nationalgeographic.com/people-and-culture/food/the-plate/2016/06/world-food-prize--why-sweet-potato-color-matters/>

<http://www.explorevitamins.co.uk/vitamin-a.html>

<http://www.womenshealthmag.com/food/foods-high-in-potassium>

Easy Friday Lunch

Sweet Potato Black Bean Chili

Prep time - 10 mins

Cook time - 45 mins

Total time - 55 mins

Serves: 6 (so freeze the rest to enjoy later!)

Ingredients

CHILI

- 1 medium yellow or white onion, diced
- 3 medium sweet potatoes, scrubbed clean, chopped into bite sized pieces
- 1 16-ounce jar salsa (chunky is best)
- 1 15-ounce can black beans, slightly drained (add salt to taste)
- 2 cups vegetable stock + 2 cups water

OPTIONAL SPICES:

- 1 Tbsp chili powder
- 2 tsp ground cumin
- 1/2 tsp ground cinnamon
- 1/2 tsp chipotle powder
- 1-2 tsp hot sauce

FOR SERVING

- Fresh Cilantro
- Chopped Red Onion
- Guacamole / Avocado

Instructions

- In a large pot over medium heat, sweat onions in 1 Tbsp oil and season with a healthy pinch each salt and pepper. Stir and continue cooking on medium heat until translucent and soft.
- Add sweet potato and any desired spices at this time (chili, cinnamon, cumin and chipotle powder - all are optional). Cook for 3 minutes, then add salsa, water and vegetable stock.
- Bring mixture to a low boil on medium high heat and then lower heat to medium-low and simmer.
- Add black beans, cover and cook for at least 20 minutes more, preferably 30 - or until the sweet potatoes are fork tender and the soup and thickened.
- Serve with fresh cilantro, onion, avocado and lime juice. Chips make an excellent spoon.

Source: <http://www.goodlifeeats.com/mexican-sweet-potato-quinoa-salad>