

March is National Nutrition Month: Eat With Environment In Mind

by Maggie Cimarolli
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Fuel for the Future

March is National Nutrition Month, an annual campaign designed by the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics. This month-long effort puts nutrition front and center, and has been celebrated since 1973. This year's awareness campaign encourages consumers to "Fuel for the Future." During the month of March, keep in mind that good nutrition does not have to be restrictive or overwhelming. Small goals and changes can have a cumulative healthful effect, and every little bit is a step in the right direction.



Eat with the environment in mind. Buying foods in-season and shopping locally when possible benefit the planet and may also help keep food costs down. Although no pre-determined distance officially defines “local,” a set number of miles from a center point is often used. Because dairy is perishable, processing plants are usually located near dairy farms; meaning most milk in Illinois and Missouri is produced, processed and sold locally.

Stay nourished and save money. When the price of food and other goods goes up, buying healthful foods may not be a priority. Yet many healthy foods are filling, cost less overall and can help manage or reduce the risk of certain chronic diseases. “Dairy foods offer high nutrition and economic value. No other beverage comes close to offering the same nutrition as real dairy milk, which contains 13 essential nutrients in every glass,” states Maggie Cimarolli, registered dietitian for St. Louis District Dairy Council.

Eat a variety of foods from all food groups. Fruits, vegetables, grains, protein foods and dairy all play a role in fueling healthy bodies. Choosing a variety of foods is important, as foods can differ in the nutrients they provide. Eat foods in various forms including fresh, frozen, canned and dried. “Milk, cheese and yogurt pair well with all food groups. Cheese with whole grain crackers, yogurt with fresh fruit and milk with a meal are great options,” notes Cimarolli. Follow MyPlate’s Daily Recommendations for each food group to get the nutrients needed at each life stage.



Make tasty foods at home. To add variety to a regular eating routine, try new flavors and foods from around the world. Learn cooking and meal preparation skills to save money and discover creative ways to use leftovers rather than tossing them out. Making a large batch by doubling a recipe will save time in the kitchen. Extra portions can be saved for meals later in the week, or frozen in individual containers as leftovers for future use.

Finding ways to include favorite foods while getting needed nutrition is important at any age. Whether cooking for one or for a large family, small changes can provide “Fuel for the Future.” Putting these simple tips into action during National Nutrition Month will help create habits that deliver lifelong health benefits. For more information on dairy’s benefits, visit www.stldairycouncil.org or contact Maggie Cimarolli at (314) 835-9688 or mcimarolli@stldairycouncil.org. Follow us on Facebook and Instagram at STLDairyCouncil.

Turkey Sweet Potato Skillet

Packed with protein and flavor, this dish will be a family favorite. Double the recipe to serve leftovers later in the week and to save time in the kitchen.

Ingredients

- 2 tablespoons butter
- 1 tablespoon garlic, minced
- 1 pound ground turkey
- 5 tablespoons ground cumin
- 2 teaspoons chili powder
- ½ teaspoon salt
- ¼ teaspoon pepper
- 1 cup onion, diced
- 1 yellow bell pepper, diced
- 3 small or 2 large sweet potatoes, peeled and diced small (about 3 1/2 cups)
- ¾ cup chicken broth
- ½ cup mozzarella, shredded
- ½ cup cheddar, shredded
- ¼ cup cilantro, chopped

Instructions

1. In a large skillet, heat butter over medium heat. Add garlic and cook for 1 minute. Add ground turkey. Cook turkey until browned.
2. Add cumin, chili powder, salt and pepper. Stir well to incorporate.
3. Add onion and bell pepper and cook for 3-4 minutes. Add diced sweet potato and broth. Stir and cover with a lid for approximately 6-8 minutes until the sweet potatoes soften.
4. Remove lid and add additional salt and pepper if desired. Top with shredded cheese. Remove skillet from heat and garnish with fresh cilantro before serving.