



Blog of the month – October 2016

Want to get on the vegetarian bandwagon? Check these tips

October is Vegetarian Awareness Month. The American Heart Association (AHA) says that vegetarian diets can be healthful and nutritionally sound if they are carefully planned and include essential nutrients. Here are some good ways to include key nutrients in a vegetarian meal, courtesy of the AHA.

Protein

According to the AHA, plant proteins can provide enough of the essential and nonessential amino acids required for a healthful diet as long as the sources of dietary protein are varied and the caloric intake is high enough to meet energy needs. Great choices include whole grains like barley, legumes, vegetables, seeds and nuts. Soy protein is another good option.

Iron

Traditional food sources for iron include red meats, liver and egg yolks. But the AHA reminds us that dried beans, spinach, brewer's yeast and dried fruits are all good plant sources for iron.

Vitamin B-12

According to the AHA, this nutrient only comes naturally from animal sources. However, B-12 can be found in some fortified breakfast cereals, brewer's yeast and other foods. Check package labels for information on Vitamin B-12.

Calcium

Vegetable greens such as spinach, kale and broccoli are good sources of plant calcium. Some legumes and soybean products are also wise choices for plant-sourced calcium.

Zinc

Good plant sources include grains, nuts and legumes.

Check out these additional tips for vegetarian dining:

- Like other healthful eating plans, keep your intake of sweets and fatty foods to a minimum.
- Choose whole or unrefined grain products (like whole grain or pearl barley) when possible.
- Use a variety of fruits and vegetables including produce that are good sources of Vitamins A and C.
- If you use dairy products, choose fat-free or low-fat varieties.

Of course, we couldn't offer up this blog without a barley recipe! Here you go:

Red Beans and Barley

This vegetarian entrée is our version of the traditional Southern favorite. It's a yummy alternative to your run-of-the-mill red beans and rice recipe.

3 tablespoons vegetable oil
1-1/2 cups chopped onion
1 cup finely chopped green bell pepper
1 cup thinly sliced celery
1 tablespoon finely chopped garlic
2 cups coarsely chopped tomatoes
1 teaspoon dried oregano
1/2 teaspoon thyme
2 bay leaves
1 teaspoon paprika
1/2 teaspoon ground cumin
2 tablespoons vinegar
2 cups cooked pearl barley (cooking directions follow)
2 cans (16 ounces each) red kidney beans, drained
1/2 teaspoon red pepper sauce
Salt and pepper, to taste
Shredded Parmesan or Romano cheese, optional

Heat oil in large heavy skillet. Add onion, green pepper, celery and garlic; sauté until vegetables are limp. Add tomatoes, herbs, paprika, cumin and vinegar. Simmer, stirring occasionally, for 15 minutes. Add cooked barley, beans and red pepper sauce. Heat through, seasoning to taste with salt and pepper. Serve with a sprinkling of shredded cheese, if desired. Makes 6 servings.

To cook barley

In medium saucepan with lid, bring 3 cups water to a boil. Add 1 cup pearl barley* and return to boil. Reduce heat to low, cover and cook 45 minutes or until barley is tender and the liquid is absorbed. Place any uncooked barley in an airtight container and refrigerate for up to a week or freeze for up to six months. Use extra cooked barley to add nutty flavor and fiber to soups, stews, casseroles and salads.

Per serving: calories 300, protein 11g, carbohydrates 49g, fat 8g, cholesterol 0, fiber 5g, sodium 543mg.

*May use whole-grain barley (usually called “hulless” or “hulled” barley) in place of pearl barley. If using whole-grain barley, the cooking time may need to be extended from 45 minutes to 55 minutes. Whole-grain barley tends to absorb less liquid, so any remaining liquid after the extended cook time should be drained.