

It's finally Spring! We've made it through another Iowa winter and it really wasn't too bad this year! I hope the warmer temperatures and longer daylight hours are inspiring you to be outdoors and stay active! In addition to toning your body, exercise has many other hidden benefits. These include clearer thinking, better balance, better circulation, easier digestion, stronger bones and arthritis relief. Recommendations from the newly released Dietary Guidelines (Jan. 2005) are for 30 minutes of moderate-intensity physical activity (above usual activity) on most day of the week to reduce the risk of chronic disease. To help manage body weight and prevent gradual, unhealthy body weight gain, increase to 60 minutes of moderate-intensity physical activity.

Pasta Primavera (from Cooking Light, April 2004)

This quick to prepare Italian classic whose name means "spring" contains many spring vegetables. You may vary them according to availability and your preferences.

- 1/2 pound uncooked pasta (choose a shorter type)
- 2 cups (1 inch) diagonally cut thin asparagus (about 3/4 pound)
- 1/2 cup shelled green peas (about 3/4 pound unshelled peas)
- 1 tsp. olive oil
- 1 small yellow pepper, cut into thin strips
- 1 small red onion, thinly sliced
- 2 garlic cloves, minced
- 1 cup halved cherry tomatoes
- 2/3 cup fat-free, less-sodium chicken broth
- 1/3 cup whipping cream or evaporated or whole milk
- 1/2 tsp. salt
- 1/2 tsp. crushed red pepper
- 1/4 cup (1 ounce) grated fresh Parmesan cheese
- 1/4 cup thinly sliced fresh basil (or use 2 Tbsp. dried basil)

Cook pasta according to package directions, omitting fat and salt. Add asparagus and peas during last minute of cooking. Drain; place in large bowl. Heat oil in nonstick skillet coated with cooking spray over medium heat. Add bell pepper, onion and garlic and sauté 5 minutes. Add tomatoes and sauté 1 minute. Stir in broth, milk, salt and red pepper; cook 2 minutes of until heated through. Add tomato mixture to pasta mixture and toss to coat. Sprinkle with cheese and basil. Serve immediately.

Makes 4 servings. Per serving= 364 calories, 11.2 g fat (less if evaporated or whole milk is used), 14.1 g protein, 4.4 g fiber, 31 mg cholesterol, 476 mg sodium.

I must share my Strawberry Shortcake recipe with all of you as we are coming into prime strawberry season (local berries will be available in late May and June). are low in calories (50 calories per cup), and a good source of potassium, vitamin C, folic acid and fiber. They contain antioxidants that help to reduce the risk of aging and chronic diseases such as cancer and heart disease. I have been making this recipe for 16 years and my family always enjoys it. The cake is low in fat and made with a healthy kind of fat. You can use Vanilla low-fat yogurt in place of the whipped cream or whipped topping to reduce saturated (whipped cream) and trans fats (found in whipped topping).

Strawberry Shortcake

- 1 and 2/3 c. flour (use cake flour if you prefer a lighter texture)
- 2 tsp. baking powder
- 1/4 tsp. ground cinnamon
- 1/8 tsp. salt
- 1 egg
- 1/3 c. sugar
- 1/2 c. nonfat milk

3 Tbsp. canola oil
1 tsp. vanilla extract

Coat an 8-inch pan with cooking spray. Combine flour, baking powder, cinnamon and salt. Stir and set aside. Beat egg in bowl until foamy and add sugar. Beat in half of flour mixture. Add milk, oil and vanilla, beating until blended. Add remaining flour mixture. Pour into cake pan. Bake at 350 degrees for 20 minutes or until wooden pick inserted in center comes out clean. Let cool in pan on wire rack. When ready to serve, split each cake piece and add yogurt/whipped cream and top with cut up berries.

Serves 9-12.

Enjoy the spring weather and as always, eat healthy and enjoy!!

Sally

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