

Apples are one of my favorite parts about the fall season. Although our local crop will be greatly reduced due to a late spring hard frost, I'll still be seeking the crunchy, crispy and tart ones from the grocery store. Not only are they tasty but they offer many health benefits. The whole body benefits from apple eating as they lower cholesterol, improve bowel function, and reduce the risk of stroke, prostate cancer, asthma and type 2 diabetes. It's the fiber and phytonutrients in the apple that provide these health benefits. The average US consumer eats about 19 pounds of fresh apples a year which works out to be about one apple a week. To get the full nutritional benefits associated with eating apples, we should be eating at least one fresh apple every day. (Who was it that said "An apple a day keeps the doctor away"? Whoever it was, he/she was absolutely right!) Another plus is that a medium size apple contains only 80 calories and provides 5 grams of dietary fiber (more than many cereals). Apples contain no fat or cholesterol so they make a heart healthy snack or addition to a meal. Both chicken and pork are complemented by apples. So don't just think of them for snacks, baking and desserts, try to fit them into your eating wherever you can!

Apple Pork Chops

1 Tbsp. olive or canola oil

6 (1-1/2" thick) boneless pork loin chops

2 cups apple cider

1/3 cup spicy mustard

3 apples, unpeeled, cored, sliced 1/2" thick

1/2 cup currants or raisins

6 green onions, chopped

2 Tbsp. cornstarch

1/4 cup water

In large skillet, heat oil and add pork chops. Brown chops on both sides, turning once. In medium bowl combine apple cider and mustard and blend well with wire whisk. Pour over chops. Cover pan and cook over medium-low heat for 40-45 minutes. Add apples, currants and green onions; cover and cook 5-10 minutes longer until pork is no longer pink in center and apples are tender. Remove pork and apples to serving platter and cover to keep warm. In small bowl combine cornstarch and water and mix to blend. Add to sauce in skillet. Cook and stir over medium heat until sauce is thickened; serve over chops and apples.

Apple Chicken Stir-Fry

1 pound cubed boneless, skinless, chicken breast
1 1/2 tablespoons vegetable oil
1/2 cup onion, vertically sliced
1 cup (2 medium) carrots, thinly sliced
1 teaspoon dried basil, crushed
1 cup fresh or frozen Chinese pea pods
1 tablespoon water
1 medium apple, cored and thinly sliced
2 cups cooked rice

1. Stir-fry cubed chicken breast in 1 tablespoon vegetable oil in nonstick skillet until lightly browned and cooked. Remove from skillet.
2. Stir-fry onion, carrots, and basil in oil in same skillet until carrots are tender.
3. Stir in pea pods and water; stir-fry 2 minutes. Remove from heat; stir in apple. Add to chicken, serve hot over cooked rice.

Makes 4 servings.

Approximate Nutritional Analysis (per serving): calories, 365; protein, 30 g; carbohydrates, 33 g; dietary fiber, 3 g; fat, 9 g; cholesterol, 62 mg; sodium, 71 mg; 22% calories from fat.

Apple Crisp

Makes 4 servings

Ingredients:

4 c. tart apples, sliced
1/4 c. whole wheat flour
1/4 c. water
1/4 c. rolled oats
1 t. lemon juice
1/2 t. cinnamon
1/4 c. brown sugar, packed
3 T. margarine

Place apples in 8x8x2 inch baking pan. Mix water and lemon juice, pour over apples. Mix sugar, flour, oats and spices. Add margarine to dry mixture; mix until crumbly. Sprinkle mixture over apples. Bake at 350 degrees until apples are tender and topping is lightly browned, about 40 minutes.

Per serving: 230 calories, 182 mg sodium, 6 g fat, 3 mg cholesterol

For those of you who may have missed the lunch and learn on whole grains last week, I have attached the handout and some whole grain recipes. I would be happy to follow up with you in person if you have any questions.

Health hint: Buy some apples and get munching! Now that we know all of their health benefits we need to eat and enjoy them regularly!

Have a great fall weekend!