



The Monthly Newsletter of the Plymouth Place Dining Services, Life Enrichment & Wellness Departments

Nutrition News You Can Use

Power of Nutrition and Healthy Aging

from our friends at Hearts & Hands United, Inc.
<https://hearts-hands.net/healthy-lifestyle-for-healthy-older-adults/>

Men and women are living longer, enjoying energetic and active lifestyles well into their 80s and 90s. Study after study confirms eating well and being active can make a dramatic difference in the quality of life for older adults.

One is never too old to enjoy the benefits of improved nutrition and fitness. With nutrient-rich foods and activities with friends, you can feel an immediate difference in your energy levels and enjoyment of life. In fact, as we get older, our food and activity choices become even more important to our health.

Focus on Nutrient Density

As adults age, they need fewer total calories, but higher amounts of certain nutrients, especially calcium and vitamin D. The focus when selecting meals should be on quality not quantity. For both optimal physical and mental health, older adults truly need to make every calorie count. For a healthy eating plan, choose a variety of foods from all the ChooseMyPlate food groups regularly.

Mediterranean Lifestyle

The Mediterranean Diet Lifestyle has been proven to provide key nutrients to decrease cardiovascular disease and promote a healthy life. Studies show that cardiovascular risk decreases significantly when following the diet guidelines.

Weight

The golden years are not the time for extreme diets or drastic weight loss. Fad diets frequently eliminate entire food groups, which can lead to serious nutrient gaps. Rapid weight loss often

leads to a loss of lean body mass, exactly the opposite of what older people need for good health. Your goal should be to eat better while staying within your calorie needs. Aim for a stable weight as you get older. The right balance of foods and activities can help you maintain strong muscles and bones.

Enjoy the Power of Protein

People of all ages need protein for strong, healthy bodies. Some older adults do not get the protein they need to maintain muscle mass, fight infection and recover from an accident or surgery. Chewing protein foods such as tough meats also can be a problem for some older adults, and they tend to avoid these foods. Here are a few tasty tips to pump up your protein intake, without upsetting your food budget or energy balance:

- **Enjoy More Beans.** Add canned beans to salads, soups, rice dishes and casseroles.
- **Make Your Crackers Count.** Spread peanut butter on whole-grain crackers and eat them as snacks or alongside soup, chili or salad.
- **Pump Up Your Eggs.** Mix grated, low-fat cheese or extra whites into scrambled eggs.
- **Flaxseed.** Add flaxseed to oatmeal or other morning cereal.
- **Quinoa.** Add this grain to your meals whenever possible.
- **Cook with Milk.** Add fat-free or low-fat milk rather than water to make soup or oatmeal.
- **Use Dry Milk Powder.** Add a tablespoon of dry milk into fluid milk, cream soups and mashed potatoes.



We want your feedback... send your comments, suggestions and ideas to Jim at jpdewan@gmail.com.



June 2023 Wellness Notes & Trends

Health Education –

Join Jada on Friday, June 23 at 10:30 am to learn about the importance of exercise recovery. This lecture will take place in the Lower Level Fitness Center. If you have any questions please reach out to Jada at 708-482-6775.

Balance Clinic –

Did you ever think virtual reality would assess your balance? Tuesday, June 20th from 12:30-1:45 pm, make your way to the Lower Level Fitness where you can get your balance checked with our VirtuSense (VR) balance device. For those who have done it in the past, we will do the same assessments- Functional Reach, Gait and TUG Test. If you have any questions call Stefanie at 708-482-6775. We hope to see you there! **PP**

Polenta, Eventually

by James P. DeWan

Welp, it's time again for our happy monthly jaunt into cheery, cheery food. Like polenta!

First, a little backstory from 1972. Snappy bellbottom trousers were the rage. George McGovern was running (preposterously, as it turned out) for president. America's favorite movie was *The Godfather* and its favorite song, Roberta Flack's *The First Time Ever I Saw Your Face* (penned, incidentally, by Ewan MacColl, a 41-year-old Scot, detailing his love for the half-his-age Peggy Seeger—Pete's half-sister—for whom the middle-aged MacColl dumped his second wife. And I thought folk music was supposed to be wholesome...)

1972 was also the year historian Alfred W. Crosby published *The Columbian Exchange*, in which he observed that, previous to Christopher Columbus and the Age of Exploration, our planet comprised two completely different worlds: the Old World—Eurasia and Africa—and the New World—the Americas. When Europeans began traipsing between the two, they took back and forth a myriad of nouns—plants, animals, diseases—changing and shaping the development of life on Earth.

From the New World, the Old World gained such delicacies as beans, chocolate, squash, corn, chiles, tomatoes, potatoes and turkeys. From the Old World, tragically, the New World inhabitants got mostly death. Between the fatal consequences of colonialism and hitherto unseen diseases like smallpox, influenza and measles, more than 50 million Native Americans died as a result of European contact in just the first hundred years after Columbus sailed the ocean blue.

In perhaps a cosmic tit for tat, the New World also gifted the Old with tobacco, which in the 20th century alone killed over a hundred million people.

Wait, what happened to the “cheery, cheery food” part?

Right. Let's backtrack. Remember those foods that originated in the New World? Well, it blows my tiny little mind how many foods associated with certain cultures are not native to those cultures. In Ireland, for example, there were no potatoes. The Swiss had no chocolate. And the Italians? No tomatoes!

Sweet pharaoh's chariot! Can you imagine Italian food without red sauce?

And speaking of Italian food, what about polenta (Finally!), the creamy-gritty mush made from ground dried corn. Turns out, polenta is much older than corn. In ancient Rome, they made the tasty glop

from grains like rye, chickpeas or spelt (an ancient variety of wheat). Once cheap and easy-to-grow corn became a staple crop in Europe, though, it became the ingredient of choice for polenta.

But, listen: When the New Worlders used corn, they used it like we think of it today: fresh from the cob or dried and turned into cornmeal. The Old Worlders, however, before they ate corn, subjected it to a process called nixtamalization: The corn is soaked in an alkaline solution (usually wood ash and water), causing it to swell and burst its outer covering. The result is called hominy and resembles large white chickpeas. Ground, it becomes a wet dough called masa, from which we get tortillas, tamales and other wonders familiar from Mexican cuisine.

Here's something else: Corn contains niacin (vitamin B3). However, our bodies can't access that niacin unless the corn has been nixtamalized. Thus, a diet that's very high in “regular” corn can lead to a niacin deficiency that leads to a nasty disease called pellagra, with symptoms the National Institutes for Health characterize inappropriately cutely as “the four D's”: dysentery, dermatitis, dementia and death. Yikes. Personally, I prefer Disney, darts, dinosaurs and dessert.

Now, because the New Worlders didn't nixtamalize their corn, pellagra became commonplace, particularly in poor areas. In rural Italy, where poverty-stricken peasants might eat polenta three meals a day, pellagra was called “the scourge and shame of Italy.”

But, we've strayed from the “cheery, cheery food” part again. Sorry.

Anyway, the traditional method of making polenta is simple: Bring a large pot of salted water to the boil, then add the ground dried corn in a slow but steady stream so it absorbs the water without clumping. Stir while cooking until the mixture is soft and creamy, about 45 minutes. Done.

If you've eaten a lot of polenta, you know it comes in various textures, from thin and creamy to very thick. Unlike other forms of porridge—oatmeal or cream of wheat—which are served mostly as sweetened breakfast foods, polenta typically is savory. It's often flavored with cheese and mostly served for lunch or dinner. (Personally, I like to chill polenta on a sheet pan until it's firm. Then I cut it into squares or ovals, grill or sear it to get some color, and serve it underneath grilled meats. Yum.)

Now, go take your B vitamins and have some yummy polenta. **PP**

JUNE 12TH:

Culinary Adventures: 4:30 pm in the Game Room

JUNE 15TH:

Italian Pop-Up Dinner: 4:30 pm in Dole Hall

JUNE 16TH:

ROMEO's: Egg Harbor, Oak Brook: Meet in the Lobby at 11:15 am

JUNE 18TH:

Father's Day Luncheon: 12:30 pm in Dole Hall

JUNE 23RD:

JULIET's: Hua Ting, Hinsdale: Meet in the Lobby at 11:15 am

JUNE 26TH:

Laudable Luncheon: “Your Mind On Flavor” with Chef Elaine Sikorski: 11:30 am in the Game Room