

**PENNY SAVER NEWS**

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It's April Fool's Day, and National Nutrition Month is just over, but that's no reason to fool with poor nutrition! Our bodies need the good stuff, year-round and life-long, to stay healthy and keep us doing our best.

One question that has come up since the new Dietary Guidelines were published is "Why so much emphasis on the different kinds of vegetables? Aren't corn and broccoli enough?" Well, corn and broccoli are better than iceberg lettuce and cucumbers, but there's still a lot more to try.

The Guidelines recommend that we eat 2 ½ cups of vegetables in some form each day, and that we should try to balance those over the whole week from 5 main groups. The groups are the dark green leafy ones, the orange, the starchy, the legumes, and the 'others', those that don't fit in any of the first 4 groups. What's different, and what's the benefit of each one? Let's take a look.

Dark green leafy vegetables are everything from beet greens to watercress. There are collards, mustard, Swiss chard, kale and turnip greens, spinach, endive and escarole, dark lettuce like romaine, and even broccoli and broccoli rabe. These have both vitamin C and A for immune protection; riboflavin for changing food into energy; folic acid to help protect our heart and arteries; the minerals calcium, magnesium and potassium to keep the blood pressure low; and even a little iron although we can't absorb it very well.

The orange veggies mostly give us lots of vitamin A. It's an antioxidant to help

our immune systems, and very important for our vision as well. The sneaky thing about this group is that it only includes those that are orange *on the inside*. These include carrots, sweet potatoes, pumpkin, calabaza and other winter squash.

Starchy vegetables not only give us starch for energy but the B vitamins niacin (for energy production and skin health) and B-6 which we need for making and getting rid of protein. They also provide zinc for immunity and to keep our sense of taste functioning, and more potassium for the blood pressure. Potatoes are the most common starchy vegetable, but corn and hominy, rutabagas and parsnips, green peas and lima beans are also in this group.

The legumes are dry beans, peas and lentils, no matter what their color or shape. These have lots of protein, starch and fiber, but very little fat. They also give us thiamin, another of the energy-producing vitamins, as well as folic acid. Their minerals include zinc and potassium, as well as magnesium and phosphorus. Magnesium is involved in just about every organ and system in our body, our bones, nerves and muscles all depend on it. Phosphorus carries energy around inside our cells, and is part of our genes. You can see they are both very important.

The rest of the veggies, that 'other' category, includes everything from alfalfa sprouts and asparagus to zucchini. Some have vitamin A, others C. Some have potassium, others magnesium or other minerals. Most have fiber, they all have flavor! These add variety, color, texture, and spice to our plates. What would we do without them? No lettuce or tomatoes? No cucumber or green beans? With such a variety it should not be hard to get those 2 ½ cups a day the Guidelines recommend.

Here's a favorite recipe of mine. It's a great way to use the last of the Easter ham and get your vegetables as well. One Acorn squash, baked, will be enough for the

recipe, or you can use butternut or other winter squash. If you don't care for the Italian flavor, use shredded Swiss cheese and nutmeg instead of the Parmesan and seasoning.

### Ham and Squash Casserole

1 C cooked ham, cut in matchsticks	2 C cooked squash (Acorn, butternut)
1/4 C finely chopped onion	2 T olive or canola oil
1/2 C evaporated fat-free milk (or cream)	1 C fine bread crumbs
pepper or Italian seasoning to taste	1/4 C grated Parmesan cheese, optional

Preheat oven to 325° F. Lightly grease a small casserole dish. Mash the cooked squash. It's okay if it's lumpy. In frying pan, heat 2 teaspoons of the oil, and saute onion until tender. Add the ham, squash and milk and saute until milk is almost evaporated. Add the seasoning. Transfer to the casserole dish. Combine crumbs and cheese in small bowl, and sprinkle over squash. Drizzle remaining oil over crumbs. Bake in preheated oven 25-30 minutes. Serves 2-4.

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