

PENNY SAVER NEWS

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March 3, 2006

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Cheesy Goodness

Almost everyone likes at least one kind of cheese. It might be as mild as processed American, as strong as sharp Cheddar, or as smelly as Limburger, but most people will admit to liking cheese. What would life be like without stringy Mozzarella on pizza? Thank goodness cheese is good food. It is a very concentrated form of milk protein and calcium in an easily digestible form. Most of us should be getting the equivalent of 3 glasses of milk a day. One and one half ounces of natural cheese, or two ounces of processed cheese are equivalent to one glass of milk.

Even people who can not drink a glass of milk without gas or pain because of lactose intolerance can usually handle a slice or two of cheese in a sandwich or mixed into a casserole. The process that turns milk into cheese also breaks down a lot of lactose (milk sugar), so cheese doesn't upset the digestion the way milk does.

However, with our growing waistlines and growing concern about the effects of fat in the diet on our arteries, hearts and overall health, cheese has fallen out of favor. While some cheese is very high in fat, others are much lower. Of course the cheese industry is trying to make low-fat and fat-free cheese to keep us happy. But even without the newer products, there are traditional lower fat cheeses for us to choose.

Take one of the worst offenders in the fatty-cheese world, cream cheese. By its very name you can tell that it has lots of fat. A block of cream cheese is one-third fat. Not only is that a lot of calories, but most of the fat is saturated. That's the kind our

livers can turn into cholesterol to plug our arteries.

Neufchatel is a traditional French cheese, very soft and mild, similar to cream cheese. It's not labeled "new!, low fat!" because it's always been lower fat. American-made Neufchatel only has 23% fat and 74 calories per ounce, compared to the 33% fat and 102 calories of cream cheese. A cheesecake made with Neufchatel might be slightly firmer because it has more protein instead of fat. But in general it can be substituted for cream cheese in most recipes without any problem.

Mozzarella is another example. While you can get whole milk mozzarella, most is made with part skim milk, and some is fat free. Melted part-skim mozzarella makes those long strings when we try to separate our slices of pizza. It's stringy because of the way it's pulled and stretched before it's cured. As with any fat-free cheese, you can't over-heat the fat-free variety or it will get tough, but it still tastes great in casseroles.

Parmesan and Romano are other traditional lower fat cheeses. Because they have such a nice strong flavor you can get the same flavor with less cheese and less fat than a high-fat cheese. Camembert and feta are also lower in fat and calories than most other cheeses.

Some processed cheeses are higher in fat, others lower, depending on how they have been made. And there are many new lower fat cheeses coming into the market these days. Read the Nutrition Facts labels to be sure that the tasty cheeses you put on your table are also lower in fat. They are a good way to boost your daily intake of calcium and other minerals for good health.

This week's recipe uses cheese of course! It's a quick and easy, high protein salad you can prepare in advance. If you prefer some extra zing, add a can of drained, chopped green chilies, or stir chili powder to taste into dressing. For less flavor use

reduced fat mayonnaise or salad dressing.

Beany Salad

1 - 15.5 oz can pinto beans	1 cup diced celery
½ cup finely diced green onions	¾ cup shredded low-fat Colby, Monterey Jack or Cheddar cheese
¼ cup fat free Thousand Island dressing	1/4 cup low fat bacon bits
1 bag ready-to-use Romaine lettuce	

Empty beans into colander, rinse and drain. Combine beans, onions, celery and cheese in serving bowl. Stir in dressing. Add more dressing if necessary to moisten. Refrigerate at least 1 hour to allow flavors to blend. To serve, distribute lettuce onto plates, top with bean salad, and garnish with bacon bits. Serves 8.

(Recipe courtesy of North Dakota WIC program)

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