

**PENNY SAVER NEWS**

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June 16, 2011

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Have you seen it yet? ChooseMyPlate is the newest version of the USDA's efforts to find a logo and a message that will convince us, or encourage us, or educate us, about how to eat a healthier diet. Just released a week ago, the logo is much simpler than the food pyramid was.

On a colored placemat, the logo shows a stylized plate, divided into four sections, with a smaller circle on one side. The four sections of the plate, in different colors, represent four of the food groups. The smaller circle represents the Dairy group, our reminder to get at least 3 servings of low-fat milk or dairy products each day. The four sections of the plate are different sizes, to indicate the relative amounts of how much we should be aiming to eat from each food group.

One half of the plate is taken up by the fruit and vegetable sections. The veggie section, in green, is larger than the red fruit section. That's how we should be filling our plates. At least half the plate should be taken up by vegetables and fruits, with more being vegetables than fruits. It doesn't matter if you prefer your veggies raw or cooked. Whether they came frozen, fresh or canned is not important. If you choose canned vegetables with No Salt Added, or frozen veggies with no cheesy, creamy, salty, fatty sauce on them, you'll be getting basically the same nutritional value from any of them. The important part is to eat more veggies. It's a good idea to get a variety of vegetables of different colors, some green, some red, some yellow, white, purple (think eggplant). You don't have to force yourself to put 3 different colors on your plate each time you

eat, but the more different colors you do eat in the course of a week, the healthier you'll be. Those different colors all give us slightly different protection from various illnesses.

The same recommendation for a variety of colors is true for the fruit section of the plate. More colors mean more health. If some meals have more fruits than vegetables on the plate, that's okay. You can balance it out with more vegetables at another meal. And the same choice of fresh, canned or frozen is true as well. Get whichever ones best suit your budget, your cooking style and your storage space. Just choose fruits canned in juice or light syrup.

The other half of the plate is divided about equally between the grains (orange quarter) and proteins (purple quarter). The recommendation for grains is that at least half the grains we eat should be whole grains. Whole grains include a lot more than whole wheat bread. Barley, brown rice, quinoa and amaranth are all healthy whole grain choices. Barley and brown rice are both available in "instant" or quick-cooking forms that only take 10 minutes to prepare. All of them can be seasoned with herbs, nuts, dried fruits or spices for a huge variety of flavors on our plates.

The protein quarter of our plate can be filled with a steak if we want, but there are plenty of other good choices here too. Of course chicken and turkey fit in here. Most of us would benefit from more seafood and the healthy oils they provide. But beans, peas and lentils are also part of this food group. Besides being good proteins, these legumes have lots of fiber and are good sources of some of those heart healthy minerals to balance our sodium. Eggs and nuts are other ways of filling our quarter-plate with protein.

The dairy foods can be off to the side of the plate, as a glass of milk or a dish of

sugar-free pudding if you prefer. But they can also be eaten as low fat cheese or fat free yogurt too. Unfortunately sour cream and cream cheese do not count in this section, since they're more fat than protein. All the dairy foods are good sources of calcium and other minerals as well as their great-quality protein.

Check out the new website [www.ChooseMyPlate.gov](http://www.ChooseMyPlate.gov) for more info, for menu ideas, ways to calculate and track your calories, and much more. Here's a slightly different version of spinach salad, to get you started on the half a plate of veggies.

#### Peanutty Spinach Salad

¼ cup peanut oil	1 ½ Tbsp red wine vinegar
¾ cup low sodium soy sauce	1 Tbsp honey mustard
¼ tsp dried dill weed	1 large bag prewashed spinach
1 ½ apples, cored and diced	½ cup dry roasted unsalted peanuts
2 Tbsp coarsely grated Parmesan cheese	

Combine oil, vinegar, soy sauce, honey mustard and dill weed in small jar. Shake well. Arrange spinach on 6 plates. Divide apple pieces, peanuts and cheese among the plates. Shake dressing again and drizzle over salads. Serves 6.