

PENNY SAVER NEWS

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It's that time of year: make the resolutions, plan to improve, resolve to do better.

Say the words 'New Year's Resolutions' and most people immediately begin to think about what they need to give up. It's as bad as Lent used to be! No more this, no more that. And we know how long a lot of those resolutions last too. Not more than a few weeks. So, how about tackling the good intentions this year from a different angle. Instead of trying to eat less, try to eat more!

Start by resolving "I will increase my daily consumption of fruits and vegetables by 1 serving per day." No matter how many you eat now, a few more will help. After you've made the step to one more for a month or so, add a second new serving per day. It doesn't matter if you're eating fresh, canned, raw, frozen, just get more. If you prefer the flavor of fresh, go for it. If the convenience of canned is for you, do it! Choose fruit canned in juice or light syrup, and pick vegetables with no added salt. Breakfast, lunch, dinner, snacks are all great times for more veggies and fruit. Stick to just one glass of fruit juice a day though. It's too easy to slurp up lots of calories without the fiber or most of the vitamins and minerals that way.

While more and more studies are finding no benefit from vitamin or mineral supplements, there is no question that diets high in fruits and vegetables increase our health. Whether it's the balanced combination of nutrients in whole produce, the fiber, or other phytonutrients we haven't identified yet, all those colorful plant foods are

healthy. Put a rainbow of colors on your plate every day, the pot of gold will be waiting!

Next resolution “I will eat whole grains at least every other day.” That does not mean you have to eat oatmeal for breakfast every day - although it would be an excellent choice. If you already eat some, work on getting more into your diet. At least half whole grains is what is recommended. Get a box of ‘instant’ (cooks-in-10-minutes) brown rice. That takes no longer than white rice to prepare. Make your next loaf of bread a whole wheat, or at least white whole wheat. If you’re still not ready for whole wheat sandwiches use one slice of white and one whole wheat. In a couple of months, try a box of quick barley. Cooks in 10 minutes, just like rice, but you enjoy the added benefits of soluble fiber to lower your cholesterol. Barley is more chewy and flavorful than rice, so you might want to start by adding it to soup or stew. And of course there are plenty of whole grain cereals. Read the ingredient list. The first thing on the list should be a whole grain, not an enriched one.

For a third possible resolution, try “I will eat fish at least once a week.” If that’s too much, try it every other week. The only kind that doesn’t count is breaded and fried fish, either as fish sticks or in fish sandwiches. The breading and frying add so much grease and calories they outweigh the benefits. Salmon and mackerel, anchovies or sardines, even common tuna, are sources of heart-healthy omega-3 fats. These cold water fish are the best, but shellfish and surimi crab meat have some omega-3. If you’re concerned about mercury, get canned fish. It’s usually the little fish that end up in cans, the ones that have had less time to eat other contaminated fish. And remember, the wider variety of fish you choose the greater the benefits and the lower your chances of problems.

Now, once you're doing these, you'll probably see your secret wish "to lose weight" happening. Fruits, veggies and whole grains, all good fiber sources, and fish, a low fat protein, all help to cut our appetite, fill us up and keep us full. When you get up to the recommended 9 to 12 servings a day of fruits and veggies, you won't be hungry enough for the extras!

Here's an easy way to increase the vegetables in your diet and get some seafood too. Serve with brown rice for more health. Happy New Year!

Health in a Dish Supper

1 med eggplant, cut into 3/4 inch cubes	1/2 cup each chopped onion and celery
1/4 cup each diced red and green sweet pepper	1 clove garlic, minced
1/2 lb med shrimp, peeled, deveined	1/2 cup crabmeat, lump or surimi
1 tsp chopped fresh basil	1/2 tsp hot sauce
2 oz (1/2 cup) shredded extra-sharp reduced-fat Cheddar cheese	

Coat large skillet with spray. Heat 1 tsp oil over medium high heat. Add vegetables and saute until tender. Add shrimp, crab, basil and hot sauce. Cook 5 minutes or until shrimp turns pink. Remove from heat, sprinkle with cheese and cover. Let stand until cheese melts. Serve over rice. Serves 4.

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