

## **PENNY SAVER NEWS**

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### Enjoy the Taste of Eating Right

'Enjoy the Taste of Eating Right' is the theme of this year's National Nutrition Month®.

Whenever the topics of 'diet' or 'healthy eating' come up, many people automatically wrinkle their noses. "Ugh! Nothing ever tastes good." is a common reaction. Maybe it's like the old joke says, everything we like is either illegal, immoral or fattening! But we DO eat by taste, not by nutrition. Of course we eat with our eyes too (if it looks great we'll have to try a piece, and we'll keep eating even if it doesn't taste as good as it looks). Still, we choose foods based on how they taste. We choose restaurants based on how well we like their flavors. Given the option of different brands, we'll go for the one that tastes the best to us, whether it is 'healthier' or not.

Many early attempts to reduce the calories by cutting the fat, or reduce the sodium by cutting the salt, resulted in bland food with poor texture. We sometimes do that at home as well. We'd look at a recipe and say "Oh, there's so much salt!" then just not add it to pot. So the flavor was poor or the texture was bad, and we promptly gave up on trying to make the food healthier.

But there are OPTIONS! In this day and age, here in America, we have dozens, maybe hundreds, of ways to season food so that it tastes good while still being good for us. With Mexican, Thai, Chinese, Indian, Cajun, Creole and Caribbean seasonings available, to give a very short list, there is no reason why we can't have healthy food on our plates every day and still keep our thousands of taste buds happy

Start with some good old American flavors. If you like peppers, there's a wide variety in the store, from mild to extreme heat, and from basic green to red, yellow, purple and black. Add enough to tickle your taste buds and please your eyes.

Another easy way to perk up flavor is add some acid. Food acids that really enhance other seasonings include lemon or orange juice, and vinegars such as cider, balsamic and flavored versions. Lemon juice often helps disguise the fact that you reduced the salt in a dish, but it adds a pleasant touch all its own even if you didn't cut back the sodium. We know a dash of vinegar is great on salad, but try adding it to soups or gravy too.

And speaking of juices, some great flavors start with juices. If you just simmer, but don't boil, juices they will gradually thicken without curdling or getting lumpy. A thickened orange juice can glaze and flavor a grilled chicken breast or really perk up a dish of green beans. Thickened beef broth becomes the base for super gravy without needing a ton of salt for flavor.

The current food craze of grilling or roasting vegetables is another easy way to add flavor without too much salt or fat. The dry heat will caramelize the natural sugars, making them sweeter and more flavorful. Caramelizing is also what we do when we slowly brown onions in a bit of oil to make French onion soup or a good onion sauce. Toss sliced or cubed veggies with herbs or spices and just a tiny bit of oil to help stick the seasoning on. Then roast in a shallow pan, or grill over high heat, until they are softened and slightly browned. Those natural sugars sure add flavor.

The popularity of international flavors has also added plenty of choices to our traditional selection of mustard, ketchup or horseradish. There are chutneys and chimichurries, wasabi and dozens of salsas. Many are available fresh, canned or frozen if you don't want to make them yourself. Use as much or as little as you like. Just keep trying them until you find the ones you enjoy, and enjoy the flavors of health.

Here's a fruity salsa that can be used as a dip with tortilla chips, as a marinade before cooking or a topping on grilled chicken, fish or pork chops. It can be mixed with non-fat plain Greek yogurt to make a dipping sauce for chicken fingers, or stirred into a bowl of hot green beans, sauteed zucchini or steamed winter squash. You could probably find some more uses for it in your family. Enjoy the taste of eating right!

#### Easy Peachy Salsa

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| 1 cup salsa, hot or mild as you like | ½ cup chopped canned or fresh peaches      |
| 2 Tbsp chopped green onion           | 1 tsp lime juice                           |
| 1 tsp honey                          | Dash of Tabasco or cayenne pepper optional |

Combine all ingredients in small bowl. Mix well. Cover and refrigerate at least half an hour. Serve with tortilla chips or any of the other uses above. (Recipe adapted from Eat Right for Less, Purdue Univ.)

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