

PENNY SAVER NEWS

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Start the Year with a Rainbow

No, I'm not wishing for a thunderstorm, and thank goodness we're not likely to have snow either. But putting a rainbow of colors on your plate would be a super way to start the New Year. The more different colors we manage to eat, the wider the variety of antioxidants, phytonutrients, vitamins, minerals and other protective ingredients we get. This is particularly true of the fruits and vegetables, but you can extend it to include the different colors of MyPlate too. That way whole grains, beans, fish and healthy dairy products are also in the picture.

See the ChooseMyPlate.gov website for the whole spectrum, and plenty of recipes and healthy eating shopping tips too. They have sections for everyone from pregnant moms and toddlers to dieters and college students. You can compare the nutrient content of different foods, find recipes and menu suggestions, get tips for healthy eating on a budget, track what you eat and how much you exercise, or even sign up for regular nutrition and exercise coaching reminders! It's all free, so why not?

Let's start with some reds. That's the color of the Fruit section of MyPlate. Red fruits - think tomatoes, red sweet peppers and watermelon - are good sources of lycopene. This phytonutrient seems to be active in preventing some cancers, including prostate and breast. There's no need to fill up on fresh tomatoes to get your red lycopene. It's actually more absorbable from cooked foods, especially those with a little fat. So add a touch of olive oil to the spaghetti sauce.

Orange fruits and vegetables are major sources of carotene to make vitamin A. Without that, you can't see. Both carotene and vitamin A are better absorbed from cooked foods than raw. Other compounds similar to carotene are being studied for their antioxidant and protective abilities. Don't get stuck with just carrots and pumpkin. Try a papaya! Stew some calabaza!

The vegetable section of the Plate is green, and so are dozens of veggies to add to our plates. But green fruits are just super too! Add a kiwi or 2 to your fruit salad. Put thin slices of green apple in your turkey sandwich or salad. Green leafy vegetables are good sources of several vitamins, as well as minerals such as potassium and calcium. We don't absorb the calcium from plants as well as we

do from dairy products. But for some of us, every little bit helps. Both of these minerals are part of the team that manages our blood pressure.

Purple goes beyond purple grapes! There are eggplants and plums. Purple carrots, cauliflower, beets, even potatoes all add different health benefits than their regular cousins. If you haven't had a purple potato, try some soon. And purple is the color of the protein section, which also has a lot more variety than we usually think of. Yes there are meats - beef, pork, lamb. Chicken and fish find their place here too. But so do the huge variety of beans and lentils available to us, as well as nuts, eggs and soy products such as tofu and tempeh. The legumes are especially healthful. Not only do they have protein, they're high in fiber to help manage cholesterol, and potassium and magnesium to help keep our blood pressure down.

Brown of course is grains, whole grains! From brown rice and whole wheat pitas to barley and quinoa, whole grains are good eating. The fiber slows digestion, which may be part of the reason that whole grains are linked to lower risk of diabetes. If you haven't yet, start the switch to whole grains now.

Blue - blueberries are for your memory, surely you've heard that! But blue colors in other fruits and veggies are also antioxidants and protect us in many other ways. Dairy is the blue section of MyPlate. Dairy products are the best way to get your calcium, as well as very digestible protein, and magnesium for blood pressure. Just keep them low-fat for best health.

Here's a budget-friendly dinner with at least 4 colors. It's super easy if you cook it in a slow cooker - High for 4-5 hrs, or Low for 8-9 hrs. Put a rainbow on your plate!

Easy Cajun Beans and Beef

2 pounds beef stew meat, in 1 inch pieces	1 can (10¾ oz) condensed tomato soup
½ cup water or low fat beef broth	1 can (14 ½ oz) stewed tomatoes
4 large carrots, peeled, chopped	2 tsp Cajun seasoning
2 (15 oz) can red kidney beans	4 cups cooked brown rice

Brown beef in large kettle. Drain off fat. Add rest of ingredients except rice. Bring to boil, reduce heat, cover and simmer 2½ hrs or until beef is tender. Stir occasionally. Serve over hot brown rice. Serves 8.

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