

HEALING HOLIDAY FOODS

Getting a healthy start on eating right in the New Year

By Erica Singleton
FOR THE CHARLOTTE POST

The holidays are a great opportunity to see family and friends at parties and gatherings, but it's also the time of year that most people put on weight.

Studies show that from November to December the average American puts on an estimated 3-5 pounds. And while that may not seem like much at once, over the years those pounds add up.

To combat the holiday heaves, and in anticipation of the inevitable New Year's resolutions to eat better and lose weight, natural healer Shifa Ali offers some food healthy alternatives, and recipes to add to your menu this holiday season and through the New Year.

Cocktails anyone?
For a tasty and festive cocktail with rich seasonal coloring that can be made alcoholic or non-alcoholic.

Pomegranate Champagne Cocktail

- 1 tablespoon grated lime peel
 - 1 tablespoon evaporated cane juice sugar
 - 1/4 cup plus 1 teaspoon fresh lime juice, divided
 - 1 1/2 cups pomegranate juice
 - 1/3 cup light Agave nectar
 - 750 milliliter sparkling water
- Note: for drinkers substitute sparkling water with champagne. Water is best for health.
1. Finely chop the lime peel. Then stir into the sugar in a

small bowl; transfer the mixture to a small plate. Lightly moisten the rims of 8 champagne flutes with 1 teaspoon of lime juice and dip the rims into sugar mixture. Freeze the flutes until sugar coating dries, at least 15 minutes

2 Combine 1/4 cup of lime juice, the pomegranate juice, and the agave nectar in a pitcher.

Immediately before serving, add the sparkling water or champagne and stir to combine. Fill each flute with ice; add cocktail, float slices of lime on top. Garnish with a sprig of mint and serve.

Healing Power: Its sweetness comes from the Agave nectar, a honey like liquid that is low-glycemic-so it will not send your endocrine system into insulin production overdrive. Enjoy while your body soaks up all the cancer-fighting polyphenols (antioxidants) in the pomegranate juice.

Along with the Agave nectar, if you are looking for alternative sweeteners, Ali recommends honey, brown rice syrup or unrefined and unbleached whole cane sugar, like Rapadura "You can cook with Rapadura, the way it's processed makes it better for our bodies," said Ali. "Honey is a good alternative, as long as it is not cooked; when cooked, honey becomes a refined sugar."

Ali added that brown rice syrup tastes similar to caramel and goes great over desserts.

Think Pink! For those try-

ing to find a healthy alternative to the main entrée of turkey and ham, Ali recommends this light and flavorful alternative.

Dijon-Lemon Sauce Salmon

- Sauce
 - 3 tablespoons Dijon mustard
 - 2 teaspoons fresh lemon juice
 - 3 tablespoons drained capers, rinsed
 - 1 tablespoon coarse-grained mustard
 - 1/3 cup finely chopped white onion pinch of cayenne pepper to taste
- Stir the first 5 ingredients together in a small bowl to blend. Season with pepper

Salmon
Bake or broil salmon to personal preference, 20 to 30 minutes to keep it moist (adjust according to your oven).

Spoon sauce over salmon evenly, garnish with sprigs of

dill Serve.

Healing Power: The omega-3 fatty acids abundant in salmon and other cold water fish reduce the risk of depression, keep arteries flexible, control general inflammation, and play a crucial role in cognitive-brain wellness.

The lesser known nutrient astaxanthin, a carotenoid that gives the fish its orange or pink color acts as an antioxidant, getting rid of dangerous, DNA-wrecking free radicals. Wild caught Pacific varieties have up to 10 times more nutrients than farm raised Atlantic types.

For those who have decided to go meatless for the year, Ali recommends non-meat vegetable patties, made with the raw pulp from juicers.

"So many people are juicing and don't know what to do with the leftover pulp," explained Ali.

She suggests using the same seasonings you do in traditional meat dishes, for

your alternative dishes, so you still have the flavors you enjoy.

"Small changes over a long period of time go a long way to a healthy future," said Ali. "It's easier to do this than to jump into a fast."

Ali majored in environmental studies at Columbia University in New York and worked with Environmental Protection Agency. She's worked in Natural Health and Healing since she was 16 years old. She said the most common foods people need to find alternatives for are white flour and dairy products.

"White flours create mucus in the body, leading to sinus and nasal congestion," Ali Macaroni and cheese is the main dish she said most people need to find an alternative for.

"Things that taste good are not always good for us," she added. "What comes to mind most often is an analogy. We all know when you add flour

to water you get paste," said Ali. "We learned that in kindergarten. The same is true in the body"

She explained that dairy products and white flours can lead to constipation, hardening of arteries, and cataracts. "Cataracts are just a build up of mucus over the pupil, that's why they can just slice it off."

And lastly, for those who like sweet potatoes, or what some call yams, she recommends eating them in a healthier way than dessert, maybe as a yam soup.

"Natural health magazines can help you make healthier choices and find recipes," said Ali. "Eat your way into a healthy New Year and beyond, with some conscious choices towards illness prevention, because it's all food related."

For more information or recipes visit www.onenesslifestyles.com or www.naturalhealthmag.com

Chicken pox immunization

Continued from 2B

Chicken pox can be spread from person to person through the air or by contact with fluid from chickenpox blisters. The varicella vaccine, Varivax, has been shown to be 70-90 percent effective in preventing the disease. The vaccine is more than 95 percent effective in protecting against severe form of Chicken Pox, should it be contracted. (If someone who has been vaccinated does get chickenpox, it is usually a very mild case.) Being vaccinated reduces excessive costs associated with medical care, prevents lost days from school or work and improves well-being.

Who should be vaccinated

The amount of vaccine a child should receive depends on the age of the child at the time of vaccination. According to recommendations set by the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices, children between the ages of 12 to 18 months should be administered one dose of vaccine, and children between 19 months and 13 years (who have never had chickenpox) should also be vaccinated with a single dose. Children with prior history of chickenpox disease do not need to be vaccinated. Individuals 13 years of age and older (who have not had chickenpox) should receive two doses of the vaccine 4 to 8 weeks apart.

All adults with no reliable history of chickenpox should receive the vaccine. Immunity is especially important for adolescents and adults who have close contact with people at high risk for serious complications and for those who are likely to come in close contact with children. The ACIP recommends vaccination if you:

- Live or work in an institutional setting or around young children (for example, teachers, day care employees, college students, staff of corrections institutions)
- Are a non-pregnant woman of childbearing age
- Travel internationally

More than 20 states have passed requirements for children entering child care and/or school to present proof of immunization or that they have had chicken pox. The decision to vaccinate your child benefits both the child and the community. School requirements for vaccination achieve high levels of protection in schools, pre-schools and child care centers.

The chickenpox vaccine is not recommended for everyone. Be sure to check with your doctor to see if chickenpox vaccine is appropriate for you, especially if you:

- Have had an allergic reaction to a vaccine
- Have HIV/AIDS or another disease that affects the immune system
- Are being treated with drugs that affect the immune system, such as steroids, for 2 weeks or longer
- Have any kind of cancer or are receiving cancer treatment with x-rays or drugs
- Are pregnant or are planning to become pregnant less than one month after the vaccination
- Have recently had a transfusion or were given other blood products

Remember, knowledge is power, but it is what you do with it that makes all the difference!

Contribution by Holly Tyler, Wake Forest University School of Medicine, Class of 2008

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