

Nutrition Quarterly

Heart and Soul Food

Many people appreciate southern cuisine for its flavor and tradition. Soul food can be packed with nutrients. For example leafy greens like kale and collards are packed with vitamins A, K, C and fiber and the sweet potato far surpasses the white potato in nutrients. However, ingredients like high-fat meats (beef, pork, sausage), high-fat dairy products (butter, cheese, whole milk, cream) and sugar are common in traditional dishes. Frequent intake of foods high in saturated fat, cholesterol and sugar can contribute to heart disease and diabetes. HIV + people are already at risk for these medical conditions due to their medications.



Luckily there are easy ways to modify these traditional recipes that taste great, are nutritious, and don't add unnecessary

saturated fat, cholesterol and sugar. Here are some ideas for ingredient substitutions for your favorite soul food.

Starch:

Mac and Cheese can still be mouthwatering by substituting the high-fat cheese and milk for low-fat or non-fat versions. Also, instead of white pasta, try whole-wheat.

Replace the white rice with brown rice in *Hoppin' John* (black-eyed peas and rice) for added fiber and B vitamins.

When making mashed or baked *Sweet Potatoes* use less brown sugar and maple syrup and replace butter with trans-fat-free margarine. Make sure to use low-fat milk!



Vegetables:

Kale, Collard and Turnip Greens can be sautéed in olive or canola oil.

Smoked turkey can be substituted for smoked pork producing a similar flavor with and fat.

Meat:

You can decrease the amount of calories and fat when baking, broiling, roasting or grilling meat rather than pan and deep frying. Use lean cuts of meat such as lean ground beef and light meat chicken and turkey without the skin. You should also remove any visible fat before cooking. If you fry your meat, use a small amount of olive or canola oil.



If you enjoy the crunchy texture of *Fried chicken*, try using whole wheat bread crumbs or crushed up cereal (bran or cornflakes). You can even add ground flaxseeds if you want to experiment. Dip the chicken in an egg-white mixture, roll in the crumbs and bake.

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Prevent Overeating

These guidelines will help you learn how to be a better listener to your body's true hunger signals and prevent overeating.

What is Appetite?

Appetite is the body's desire to eat. It helps digestion by awakening our hunger signals and supplying the body with the energy and nutrients needed to perform daily functions.

Eat when you are hungry and stop when you are full.

When you feel hungry, it is time to eat. For most of us, this means eating every 3-5 hours. Eat slowly and stop when you feel comfortably full, but not stuffed.

Repeated overeating can cause you to lose the ability to feel hunger so it can take some time to redevelop this skill.



Use the HALT strategy.

Before eating ask yourself if you are eating because of **Hunger, Anger or Anxiety, Loneliness** or because you are **Tired**. Before you reach for food to heal emotional issues try some relaxing non-food related activities such as walking, calling a friend, or trying an alternative therapy at GMHC like yoga, meditation or reiki before you get into crisis mode and overeat.

Some like it HOT! Cayenne Pepper



Cayenne pepper, also known as *Capsicum frutescens*, is a red, hot chili pepper used to flavor dishes. It is made from the pepper's dried pods and is well known for its strong taste and smell. Cayenne is often referred to as chili, which is the Aztec name for cayenne pepper. It is a popular spice used in many South American, Asian and West Indian cuisines.

Cayenne contains flavonoids and carotenoids which are antioxidants that our bodies use to neutralize dangerous free radicals which can cause damage to cells and arteries.

Cayenne peppers can be added to salads, stir-fries, and meat dishes. It can also be added to sauces and soups for a hot zesty flavor. However, don't over do it because extremely high intake can aggravate the stomach.

Besides cooking, cayenne has also been used in medicine. The most important ingredient in the herb is "capsaicin," which is rubbed on the skin to relieve arthritis and pain from nerve problems.

Cayenne Avocado Dip

Ingredients:

- 2 avocados
- juice of 1/2 lemon
- 2 tablespoons minced onion
- 2 tablespoons minced cilantro
- 1 clove of smashed, chopped garlic
- 1/2 diced tomato
- salt to taste
- pinch of cayenne pepper

Directions:

1. In a small bowl, smash the avocado using a fork and a spoon for best results.
2. Mix the rest of the ingredients into the avocado mixture
3. Store in a covered container for not to much more than an hour before you plan to use it.

This is one you must taste as you make it, to know how much you like of the different ingredients.

Sources:

1. PDR for Herbal Medicine, 4th edition, 2007
2. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cayenne>
3. <http://www.whfoods.com/genpage.php?tname=foodspice&dbid=140>
4. <http://recipes.epicurean.com/recipe/251/guacamole.html>

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Southern Okra

- 1 1/2 cups sliced okra
- 1/4 cup chopped onion
- 1/2 green bell pepper, chopped
- 2 tablespoons vegetable oil
- 1 can (14.5 ounces) tomatoes with juice, or 1 1/2 cups tomato puree
- 2 teaspoons sugar
- 1 tablespoon flour blended with 1 tablespoon cold water
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 1/4 teaspoon pepper or 1/2 fresh cayenne pepper



Cook okra in boiling salted water 10 minutes. Drain. Brown onion and green pepper in salad oil. Add tomato juice, cook slowly 5 minutes. Add okra and remaining ingredients. Cook over low heat 5 minutes longer. Serves 4.

Source: <http://southernfood.about.com/od/okra/r/bl10814j.htm>

**Vegetable of the Quarter:
Okra**



Okra is a small, green vegetable with a mild flavor. Okra is low in saturated fat, cholesterol and sodium. It is also high in dietary fiber, and many vitamins and minerals such as vitamin A, vitamin C, and zinc, to name a few.

You can find fresh okra now because it is in season, or you can buy it canned, frozen or pickled. When buying fresh okra, look for young pods free of bruises, tender but not soft, and no more than four inches long. Okra may be stored in the refrigerator in a paper bag or wrapped in a paper towel in a perforated plastic bag for two to three days, or it may be frozen for up to 12 months after blanching whole for two minutes. Cooked okra can be stored (tightly covered) in the refrigerator for three to four days.

When cut, okra releases a sticky substance that can thicken soups and stews. Gumbos, Brunswick stew, and pilaus are some well-known dishes that often use okra. Okra can be served raw, marinated in salads or cooked on its own, and goes well with tomatoes, onions, corn, peppers, and eggplant. These vegetables are all in season right now.

Source: <http://southernfood.about.com/library/weekly/aa081401a.htm>

(Soul Food)

Meat Loaf is usually bound with white bread, which has few vitamins and minerals. This is the time to add grains. Replace white bread or bread crumbs with bulgur, barley, wild rice, whole wheat couscous or whole wheat bread. Use a leaner blend of meat, such as 95% lean beef or turkey. Add spices, herbs and sun dried tomatoes to add flavor without added salt. Try



vegetables like bell peppers, onions,

shredded zucchini, diced mushrooms or diced tomatoes mixed with the ground meat.

A little word on salt:

Most foods require little or no added table-salt, so taste your food before you season it. Canned beans and vegetables contain high amounts of salt. If you have to use them, do not add extra salt. Remember, rinsing canned vegetables with water helps remove some salt.

Salt should be substituted with

herbs, lemon or lime juice and spices. An herb that can add some heat to a recipe is cayenne pepper. [For more about this spice, check out the side bar on page 1].

These substitutions will not compromise taste, as long as you make changes gradually. Give yourself time to adjust to new flavors and new habits. Don't give up after the first try.

Sources

1. www.eatingwell.com
2. www.wellnessways.aces.uiuc.edu/pdf/ho_recipesAfAmCuisine.pdf