

THE MEDITERRANEAN DIET

What is it?

The Mediterranean diet has long interested people studying nutrition because of its positive effects on health, but its popularity soared among the public in the 1990's. It is based on the dietary patterns of several areas around the Mediterranean Sea including Southern Italy, Greece, and Crete. It is often referred to as the Gold Standard of healthy eating.

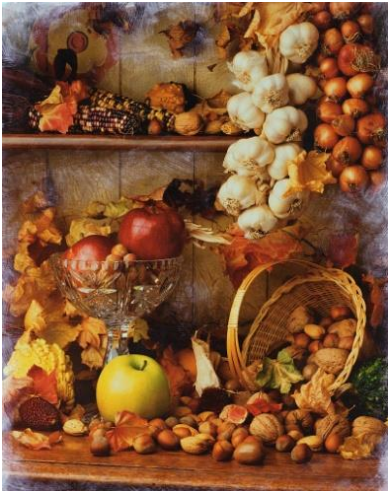
A high fat diet is good?!

You may have heard of the French paradox? Well, the Mediterranean Diet paradox is pretty similar. People eat a high fat diet, yet are healthier. Rather than limiting fat, the diet makes wise choices about the types of fats. Fats from olive oil, nuts and seeds are the foundation of this diet.



Benefits beyond heart health

Eating a Mediterranean diet also reduces risk of other chronic diseases including some cancers, diabetes, metabolic syndrome, dementia, obesity, and mental health problems.



General Principles

- Include fresh, in season, healthy foods.
- Eat meals with family and friends.
- Eat small portions of high quality food.
- Include lots and lots of plant based foods.
- Cook from scratch ... avoid processed foods.
- Enjoy eating legumes often. Eat only very small amounts of meats, especially red meats.
- Drink red wine, in moderation, with meals.
- Eat fruit for dessert.
- Nuts, seeds and olive oil are the main fats and are included with each meal.

A picture is worth 1000 words – turn over the page to see the Mediterranean diet pyramid. As you move up the pyramid, foods are eaten less often and in smaller amounts.

Mediterranean Diet Pyramid

A contemporary approach to delicious, healthy eating

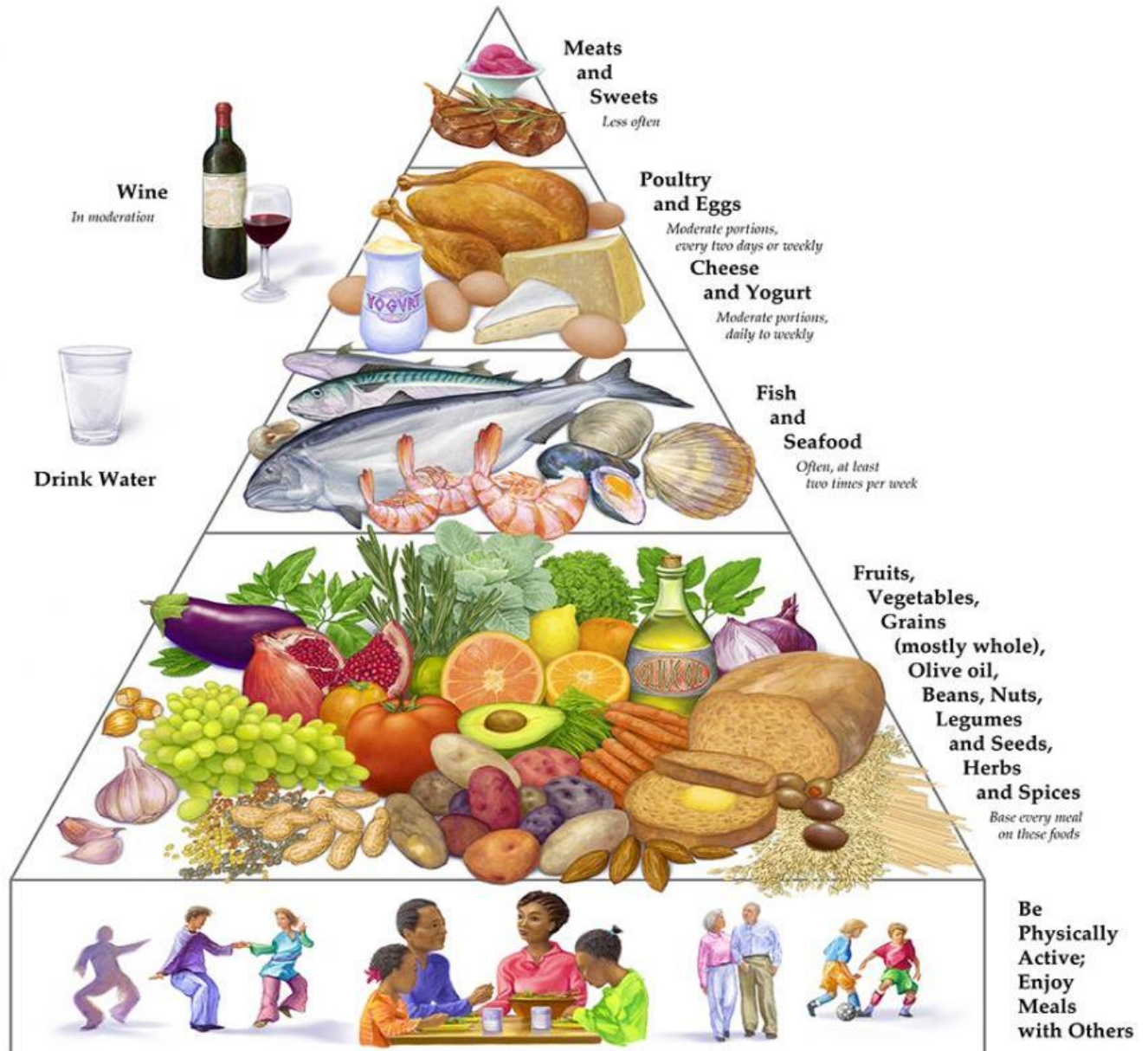


Illustration by George Middleton

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For more information, meal plans and recipes visit

<https://oldwayspt.org/traditional-diets/mediterranean-diet>

EatRight Ontario resources:

The Mediterranean Diet: A Guide to Healthy Eating <http://www.onpen.ca/docviewer.aspx?id=12650>

Mediterranean Diet Sample Menu (1500 kcal) <http://www.onpen.ca/docviewer.aspx?id=12651>

Mediterranean Diet Sample Menu (2000 kcal) <http://www.onpen.ca/docviewer.aspx?id=12766>

NUTRITION WEBSITES

These websites provide up-to-date, evidence-based nutrition information.

Eat Right Ontario

<http://www.eatrightontario.ca/>

<http://www.eatrightontario.ca/en/menuplanner.aspx>

Health Canada

<http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/hl-vs/eat-aliment/index-eng.php>

<http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/fn-an/nutrition/index-eng.php>

Mediterranean Diet

<https://oldwayspt.org/traditional-diets/mediterranean-diet>

The Heart & Stroke Foundation

<http://www.heartandstroke.ca/>

→ Get Healthy

Diabetes Canada

<http://www.diabetes.ca/>

→ Diabetes & You

Canadian Cancer Society

<http://www.cancer.ca/>

→ Prevention → Nutrition & Fitness

Dietitians of Canada

<http://www.dietitians.ca>

→ Your Health

Websites for Tracking Food and Activity

<http://www.eattracker.ca/>

<http://www.myfitnesspal.com/>

<http://www.sparkpeople.com/>

<http://dailyburn.com/>

www.livestrong.com/thedailyplate/

www.fitday.com/

<http://runkeeper.com/>

FACTS ON SOLUBLE FIBRE

What is fibre?

Dietary fibre is a substance our bodies cannot digest. Fibre is found naturally only in plant products. There are two types of fibre known as soluble and insoluble

- Insoluble fibre helps to keep your bowels regular.
- Soluble fibre has heart health benefits.

Why use soluble fibre in your diet?

- ♥ Helps to lower LDL (lousy/bad) blood cholesterol levels
- ♥ Helps to control blood sugar levels
- ♥ Delays stomach emptying and gives a feeling of being full longer to help control appetite

How do you use it?

- ♥ Enjoy oats or oat bran cereals for breakfast
- ♥ Mix cereals containing psyllium (e.g., All Bran Buds) with other cereals
- ♥ Add oats, oat bran, ground flaxseed, chia or cereals containing psyllium to bread mixes, pancakes, muffins, yogurt, smoothies, soups & casseroles
- ♥ Add barley to soups and casseroles or serve as a side dish in place of rice
- ♥ Use oats in place of breadcrumbs when making meatloaf or hamburgers
- ♥ Add unsalted peanuts, soybeans or avocado, berries or oranges to salads
- ♥ Add cooked navy or black beans to soups, chili and salads
- ♥ Mix cooked lentils with lean ground beef in recipes e.g. spaghetti meat sauce or Shepherd's pie
- ♥ Choose snacks such as: roasted soy nuts, edamame, unsalted peanuts, apples, oranges, pears, bean/avocado or hummus dips with vegetables
- ♥ Mix baked squash and carrots with mashed potatoes
- ♥ Consider a psyllium fibre supplement (e.g. Metamucil™, Prodiem™, Benefibre™, Fibresure™)

Other important information

Add fibre into your diet **gradually**, and spread the high fibre foods out over the day. This will help to avoid the gas or possible stomach discomfort that can come from increasing fibre intake too quickly.

You also need to increase your water or fluid intake when eat more fibre.

For more information or recipes of legumes (beans) visit the following web sites:

Canadian Lentils – www.lentils.org

Barley council of Canada – www.gobarley.com

Pulse Canada – www.pulsecanada.com

Ontario white beans producers – www.ontariobeans.on.ca

See back of page for sources of soluble fibre

RETHINK YOUR SPREAD

Non-hydrogenated margarine and small amounts of butter can be part of your heart healthy diet. But, why not try these other heart healthy ways to add flavour and nutrition to sandwiches and vegetables . . .



Extra virgin olive oil
(add herbs/spices for added flavour)

Hummus
chick peas, tahini (sesame seed paste), garlic, lemon



Olive tapenade
Kalamata olives, garlic, basil, olive oil, capers

Tzatziki
cucumber, mint, parsley, lemon, plain Greek yogurt



Nut/Seed Butters
e.g., peanut, almond, unsweetened soy nut, pumpkin seed

Mashed avocado



Plant Sterol Fortified Foods Examples

(Local availability of fortified foods may vary)

	Cal	Plant Sterols (g)	Saturated & Trans Fat (g)	Carb (g)
Margarines				
Becel pro.activ® Margarine with plant sterols 2 tsp (10 g)	30	0.8	0.5	0
President's Choice Celeb® Margarine with plant sterols 2 tsp (10 g)	70	0.8	1	0
Yogurt Drinks				
President's Choice Blue Menu Yogurt Drink with plant sterols, 1 bottle (93 ml)	80	1	0	16
Juices				
Oasis® Health Break Cholest Prevent Juice 1 cup (250 ml)	110	1	0	28
Minute Maid® Heart Wise Orange Juice 1 cup (250 ml)	120	1	0	28

How to choose?

- **Note:** Just because a food has been fortified with plant sterols, it does not mean it is a heart healthy choice. Many products with added plant sterols are high in sugar like fruit juices or are ultra-processed foods like margarine.
- Check the label to find the product that best suits your dietary needs.
- Check with a Registered Dietitian to help you select the best combination of products for your needs.

Important Notes

No negative interactions between phytosterols and medications have been found*; foods containing plant sterols may be eaten while on cholesterol-lowering medications (such as statins).

Breastfeeding or pregnant women have specific nutritional needs and lowering blood cholesterol is not a priority. Plant sterols are not recommended in this case.

Plant sterols are not a magic bullet. You can't chase your cheeseburger and fries with a plant sterol drink and expect to have a healthy heart.

**A combination of a heart healthy diet with plant sterols,
will help improve blood LDL cholesterol levels**

*At the time of publication, there are two PCSK-9 inhibitors available in Canada, Evolocumab and Alirocumab. Neither drug has formal studies on interaction with plant sterol supplementation. For additional information, please see the most current product monographs for these medications.

Where to find plant sterol supplements?

- Plant sterol supplements can be found at most pharmacies and health food stores.
- Contact a Registered Dietitian to help choose a product right for you.
- The list below is of Canadian licenced products that have been rated by the Natural Medicines Comprehensive Database

Plant Sterol Supplement Examples⁵

Disclaimer: The examples below are not intended to replace individualized advice from a Registered Dietitian or other health professional.

Product Name	Suggested Use	Total Amount of Plant Sterols (grams)
Centrum Cardio Multivitamin	2 tablets per day with food	1 g
Cholessterol™ with Vegapure® by Swiss Natural	1 capsule twice daily OR 2 capsules twice daily with food	1.3 g OR 2.6 g
Chol SAP-15 by NFH	2 soft gels twice daily with food	1.4 g
ModuChol™ by Nature's Harmony	1 capsule twice daily with food	1.3 g
NOW Foods Beta-Sitosterol Plant Sterol Esters with fish oil	1 soft gel three times daily with food	1.5 g
Phytosterols by Vachon	2 capsules twice daily with food	1.4 g
Sterols & Sterolins Cholesterol by New Roots	3 soft gels daily with food	1 g

(5) Natural Medicines Comprehensive Database, online service, accessed February 8, 2017

Where to find fortified foods?

- Fortified margarine, yogurt drinks, juices and supplements may be found in your grocery store.
- See the chart on next page
- As interest in fortification of foods with phytosterols continues, this list will change.
- Contact a Registered Dietitian to find out more.

FACTS ON PLANT STEROLS

What are plant sterols?

Plant sterols and stanols, also known as **phytosterols**, are compounds found in plants that have the same structure as cholesterol.

They are naturally present in **small amounts** in plant-based foods like vegetable oils, whole grains, fruits, vegetables, nuts and seeds.

Why are plant sterols important?

Plant sterols help to lower blood levels of LDL (lousy/bad) cholesterol.

- They block some of the absorption of cholesterol in food into the bloodstream, so that more cholesterol stays in the intestine and is removed from the body.
- Plant sterols can reduce LDL cholesterol by 6-12%¹.
- A 10% reduction in LDL cholesterol can reduce heart disease risk by 12 to 20% over five years and by 20% over a lifetime².

Can you get enough plant sterols naturally to lower LDL cholesterol at this rate?

- No. A typical diet provides only about 0.2 grams of plant sterols, far less than the amount needed to cut cholesterol levels.
- **Plant sterol supplements and fortified foods** are available to help meet the daily requirements for plant sterols.

What is the recommended dose for plant sterols?

- **Adults** need **2 grams** of plant sterols a day to lower LDL cholesterol.
- **Children** with elevated LDL cholesterol can safely consume **1 gram** of plant sterols daily³.
- For best results, take plant sterol supplements or eat plant sterol fortified foods two or three times a day.
- More is not better with plant sterols. Taking more than recommended may reduce absorption of some vitamins⁴.

References: (1) CCS Lipid Guidelines 2016. (2) Katan MB *et al.* Efficacy and Safety of Plant Stanols and Sterols in the Management of Blood Cholesterol Levels, *Mayo Clin Proc* 2003;78:965-78. (3) <http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/fn-an/label-etiquet/nutrition/cons/claims-reclam/faq-eng.php> (4) Pirro M *et al.* Joint position statement on "Nutraceuticals for the treatment of hypercholesterolemia" of the Italian Society of Diabetology and the Italian Society for the Study of Arteriosclerosis

How much?

The American Heart Association recommends 10 to 25 grams of soluble fibre per day to help lower your cholesterol. Here is a list of the soluble fibre content of some foods.

3.0 or more grams per serving		Grams	1.0 – 1.9 grams per serving (cont'd)		Grams
passion fruit, purple	1/2 cup	6.5	peach (with skin)	1 med	1.0 - 1.3
black beans, cooked	1/2 cup	3.6	blueberries	1/2 cup	0.9 - 1.3
lima beans, cooked	1/2 cup	3.5	green peas, cooked	1/2 cup	0.8 - 1.3
soy nuts, roasted	1/4 cup	3.5	collard greens, cooked	1/2 cup	1.3
			carrots, cooked	1/2 cup	1.1 - 1.2
			flax seed, whole	1 Tbsp	0.6 - 1.2
2.0 – 2.9 grams per serving		Grams	oat flakes	3/4 cup	1.1
All-Bran Buds™ (with psyllium)	1/3 cup	2.7	plums (with skin)	2	1.1
prunes	1/2 cup	2.4	prunes, dried	3	1.1
psyllium husks, ground	1 Tbsp	2.4	apricots, dried	1/4 cup	1.1
psyllium supplement, Metamucil™ (powder)	1 dose (as per package)	2.4	guava	1	1.1
psyllium supplement, Metamucil™ (wafers)	1 packet of 2	1.0 - 3.0			
oat bran, cooked	3/4 cup	2.2	hazelnuts	1/4 cup	1.1
navy beans, cooked	1/2 cup	2.2	mango	1/2	0.7 - 1.1
artichoke	1 globe	2.2	grapefruit	1/2	0.7 - 1.1
pinto beans, cooked	1/2 cup	2.1	potato, white (with skin)	1 small	1.1
avocado	1/2	2.1	Cheerios™	1 cup	1.0
chia seeds	1 Tbsp	1.4 - 2.1	apple (with skin)	1 med	1.0
Brussels sprouts, cooked	1/2 cup	2.0	green beans, cooked	1/2 cup	1.0
soy burger patty	85 gm	2.0	okra, cooked	1/2 cup	1.0
kidney beans, cooked	1/2 cup	1.7 - 2.0			
			Under 1.0 gram per serving		Grams
1.0 – 1.9 grams per serving		Grams	bread, rye	1 slice (30 gm)	0.5 - 0.9
figs, dried	1/4 cup	1.9	barley (pearl), cooked	1/2 cup	0.8
tofu, cooked	1/2 cup	1.9	beets, cooked	1/2 cup	0.8
orange	1 medium	1.8	cauliflower, cooked	1/2 cup	0.8
sweet potato (no skin), cooked	1/2 cup	1.8	banana	1 med	0.7
popcorn, popped	3 cups	1.8	peanuts	1/4 cup	0.6
quinoa, cooked	1/2 cup	1.7	quinoa seeds	1 Tbsp	0.6
turnip, cooked	1/2 cup	1.7	cabbage, raw	1 cup	0.5
asparagus, cooked	1/2 cup	1.7	tomato, raw	1/2 cup	0.5
brown beans, cooked	1/2 cup	1.7	strawberries	1/2 cup	0.5
flax seed, ground	2 Tbsp	1.2 - 1.6	blackberries	1/2 cup	0.5
soybeans, cooked	1/2 cup	1.5	lentils, cooked	1/2 cup	0.5
edamame (green soybeans), cooked	1/2 cup	1.5	brown rice, cooked	1/2 cup	0.5
broccoli, cooked	1/2 cup	1.2 - 1.5	pasta, whole wheat, cooked	1/2 cup	0.5
pear (with skin)	1 med	1.1 - 1.5	pasta, white, cooked	1/2 cup	0.5
oatmeal, cooked	3/4 cup	1.4	bread, whole wheat	1 slice (30 gm)	0.5
bran cereal (non-flake)	1/3 cup	1.4	almonds	1/4 cup	0.4
chickpeas, cooked	1/2 cup	1.4	sunflower seeds	1 Tbsp	0.3
apricots (with skin)	3	1.4	wheat germ	1 Tbsp	0.1
nectarine (with skin)	1 med	1.4	bread, white	1 slice (30 gm)	0.0
corn, cooked	1/2 cup	1.3	wild rice, cooked	1/2 cup	0.0
eggplant	1/2 cup	1.3			

References: Dietitians of Canada Practice, Practice-based Evidence in Nutrition (PEN), 2012, Bell Institute of Health and Nutrition, 2003 General Mills

Creamy Microwave Oatmeal

Makes 1 serving

Ingredients

- 1 cup (250 mL) [low-fat milk](#) (or ½ cup water + ½ cup milk)
- 1/2 cup oatmeal
- 1/4 teaspoon [cinnamon](#)

Directions

1. In a large microwave safe bowl, mix together all ingredients. (Make sure you use a container big enough so it doesn't boil over)
2. Microwave on medium-high for 1 minute.
3. Stir mixture. Continue to microwave 1-2 minutes or until thick.
4. Remove oatmeal from microwave. Cover and let stand for 1 minute.
5. Serve warm with additional milk if desired.

Options:

- Add chopped apple, 1-2 Tbsp [raisins](#) or other dried fruit before cooking
- Top with fruit such as berries, banana, peaches
- Sweeten with sugar, maple syrup or sugar substitute.

For extra fibre, stir into cooked oatmeal:

- 1 – 2 Tbsp ground flax seed
- 1 – 2 Tbsp wheat bran

Colour Your Own Overnight Oatmeal

Makes 1 serving

Prep time: 2 mins

No cooking but overnight refrigeration required

Ingredients

- 125ml-175ml (½-¾ cup) no sugar added or plain yogurt or milk
- 60ml (¼ cup) large flake oatmeal
- 60ml (¼ cup) fruit (berries, banana, kiwi, peaches, apples)
- 2 TBSP nuts
- Cinnamon

Directions

1. In container with tight fitting lid mix yogurt and uncooked oats. Stir in desired fruit.
2. Cover, refrigerate 6-8 hours but no longer than 3 days.

Source: Betty Crocker website

Barley Risotto

Makes 4 cups. (1 L) or 8 ½-cup servings

Ingredients

2 tsp (10 mL) canola or olive oil
2 medium onions, diced
2 large portobello mushrooms, coarsely chopped
3 cloves garlic, minced
¾ cup (175 mL) pot barley
2 ½ cups (625 mL) lower sodium chicken or vegetable broth
¼ cup (50 mL) Parmesan cheese

Directions

1. Heat a medium saucepan that has a tight fitting lid over medium heat. Add the oil & onions. Sauté for 1 minute.
2. Add the mushrooms & garlic. Sauté for 1 minute.
3. Add the pot barley & broth and stir. Bring to a boil. Reduce the heat, cover & simmer for 50 minutes or until the barley is cooked.
4. Remove from heat. Gently stir in the Parmesan & serve.

Note: substitute for portobello mushrooms: 6 – 8 chopped small white or cremini mushrooms or 1 small can of mushrooms, drained

Recipe adapted from Ultimate Foods for Ultimate Health by Liz Pearson & Mairlyn Smith

Tofu Stir-Fry

Serves 4

30 minutes or fewer

Serve over brown rice and be creative depending on the vegetables you have in your fridge.

Ingredients

1 tbsp. sesame or canola oil
454g block firm tofu, cubed
2 Tbs. hoisin sauce
1 Tbs. low-sodium soy sauce
¼ cup water
1 medium onion, chopped
2 cloves garlic, minced
1 cup thinly sliced purple or green cabbage
10 white mushrooms, halved
1 small red bell pepper, sliced (1 cup)
2 cups broccoli, chopped
Black pepper to taste
Chile sauce to taste, optional
2-4 Tbsp sesame seeds or cashews, optional

Directions

1. Heat oil in wok or large skillet over medium heat and add tofu, cook for 3-4 minutes until browned on one side and then flip. Cook another 3-4 minutes until browned.
2. While tofu is cooking whisk together hoisin sauce, soy sauce and water in small bowl.
3. Once tofu is browned on two sides, add onion and sauté for 3-4 minutes until softened.
4. Add garlic, cabbage, bell pepper, mushrooms and broccoli. Cover and cook for 2-3 minutes and then add hoisin sauce mixture.
5. Continue cooking for another 5-8 minutes, stirring occasionally until vegetables have reached desired tenderness. Add optional ingredients if desired before serving and adjust seasonings.

Peanut Sauce Version:

Omit hoisin sauce and water. Mix 2 tbsp soy sauce, 1 tbsp rice vinegar, 1 tbsp sugar, 3-4 tbsp of peanut butter and ½ cup coconut milk in a cup until smooth. Add to vegetable mixture in step 4 instead of hoisin sauce mixture.

Red Lentil Tomato Sauce

Serves 6-8

Ingredients

2 tablespoons (30 mL) olive oil
2 bell peppers, diced
1 onion, minced
2 cloves garlic, minced
6-8 Mushrooms (optional)
1 tablespoons (15 mL) fresh basil, chopped
1 teaspoon (5 mL) oregano
2 – 28 oz cans Tomatoes
1 cup (250 mL) red lentils
¼ cup (50 mL) water

Directions

1. Rinse red lentils in a fine mesh colander under cold running water. Set aside.
2. Heat olive oil on medium heat.
3. Add the diced peppers, minced onions, garlic, and mushrooms and cook until they begin to soften, approximately 6-8 minutes.
4. Add the 2 cans of tomatoes, basil, oregano, water and bring to a boil.
5. Once the sauce is boiling, turn down to a simmer and add the rinsed lentils.
6. Simmer for 35 minutes or until the lentils are tender. Serve over your favourite pasta.

RECIPES

Minestrone Soup

(Adapted from recipe source: Heart & Stroke)

Serves 6-8

This is a great soup to make at the end of the week when you have a lot of produce to use up. Any fresh seasonal vegetables can be used in this recipe. This soup freezes well and makes for a great leftover for lunch. Serve with a crusty whole grain bun.

Ingredients

1 tbsp (15 mL) olive or canola oil
1 cup (250 mL) onion, diced ~ 1 large
1 cup (250 mL) carrot, diced ~ 2 large
1 cup (250 mL) celery, diced

2 cloves of garlic, chopped or 1 tsp garlic powder
2 medium potatoes, peeled and diced or ½ cup macaroni or small pasta
1 cup (250 mL) zucchini, diced ~ 1 medium or 1 cup green beans, chopped
1 cup (250 mL) cabbage, shredded
2 cups (500 mL) plum tomatoes, fresh or canned, diced
4 cups (1 L) sodium reduced chicken or vegetable stock
2 cups (500 mL) water
1 can 19oz (540 mL) navy or kidney beans, drained and rinsed

½ cup (125 mL) fresh parsley, chopped or 2 Tbsp dried parsley
1 bay leaf
1 tsp (5 mL) dried basil
1 tsp (5 mL) dried oregano
½ tsp (2 mL) dried thyme
pepper to taste

Garnish: Grated parmesan cheese (optional)

Directions

1. Heat oil in a large pot over medium heat. Add onion, carrot and celery and sauté without browning for about 10 minutes.
2. Add the rest of the ingredients, except the cheese, and simmer on medium heat for 20-30 minutes.
3. Pour into bowls and top with parmesan cheese (if using).