

... March 2012 ...

QUICK TAKES

Healthy Eating for Busy People



Long work hours and unfinished to-do lists often push our healthy eating habits to the back burner. But being too busy doesn't have to be your excuse for ordering a pizza or picking up dinner at the drive-thru window.

- More and more, health-conscious consumers are relying on their supermarkets as a place to grab a freshly made, healthy meal.
- Consumers' increasing focus on eating fresh, healthy foods has presented a huge opportunity for supermarkets' prepared foods programs.
- Storeowners also recognize the economic challenges many shoppers are currently facing: As gasoline and food prices climb, shoppers are looking for less expensive alternatives to restaurant takeout.

Healthy Options from Your Supermarket Grab-and-Go

With so many tempting choices available now, many consumers are looking for ways to choose the healthiest ones available.

ROTISSERIE CHICKEN AND MORE

A rotisserie chicken is an affordable (\$7 to \$8), versatile source of lean protein that can be a great start to a variety of quick meals. Pick up a bag of mixed salad greens and an easy veggie for the simplest of suppers. Or shred the meat (discarding the skin) for burritos or your favorite chicken salad.



Supermarkets know that the aroma of roasting chicken will draw many customers to the deli department. They're also discovering that customers are eager to buy roast or grilled turkey breast, pork tenderloins, fish such as arctic char and salmon, and even tofu and vegetables. If you're shopping for dinner, try to find a market that does its grilling and roasting later in the afternoon for best flavor and freshness.

GO SEE THE SEAFOOD COUNTER

Even if we had the time, many of us shy away from cooking fish at home. In the U.S., about twice as much seafood is consumed at restaurants compared with at home. Yet it's important to not neglect this virtually fat-free protein source. Often, the fish counters in large supermarkets have a steamer to cook your shrimp, clams or lobster right in the store. You'll also find ready-to-cook kebabs and pre-seasoned fish steaks in the seafood case. Don't forget sushi. It's an ideal on-the-run lunch or dinner. If you don't like the thought of raw fish, most sushi cases stock a selection of cooked fish sushi or even veggie-only sushi.



SOUP IT UP!

Italian minestrone, Cuban black bean, Turkish red lentil, Spanish gazpacho -- there's a new world of made-from-scratch soups available at many supermarkets these days. Kowalski's Markets in St. Paul, Minn., even has a program built around Vietnamese soups where customers can pick the fresh ingredients to create their own pho.



Broth-based soups, especially ones swimming with vegetables, are filling yet low in calories. Shoppers can usually purchase soup by the cup or pint for lunch or by the quart to serve a family at dinner. Savvy markets will post their daily specials online or on Facebook so you can check out the offerings before you go.

Healthy Market-Prepared Foods

More often than not, prepared foods in the supermarket deli case do not come with a handy Nutrition Facts printout. At least not yet. You can certainly ask the counter person about the specific ingredients in the lasagna, stuffed pork chops or other temptations for sale that day, but as far as the exact number of calories and grams of fat, you're usually on your own.

Don't despair. Follow these tips to ensure healthy choices for balanced meals that fit into anyone's diet.



- Fried chicken, fried fish and simply anything fried should be avoided. The calorie, fat and sodium levels are all likely to exceed healthy limits.
- Pasta dishes, especially mac 'n' cheese, tend to be very high in calories. And they're rarely prepared with whole grain pastas. If you're hungry for pasta, choose a dish that's made with a red sauce and lots of vegetables. Be sure to watch portion size, too.
- Expand your palate and explore some of the many ethnic dishes available in today's deli case. The foods often include healthy beans, lentils or veggies that don't show up as often in mainstream American foods.
- Visualize MyPlate. The USDA's new eating model suggests that your protein take up no more than a quarter of the space on your dinner plate. When purchasing prepared entrees, think about smaller portion size. That leaves plenty of room on your plate for a big salad of mixed greens plus veggies, fruit and a whole grain roll or rice pilaf.
- Convenience has made it to the produce aisle as well. Pre-washed salad and slaw mixes make salad prep close to effortless these days. Butternut squash comes peeled and cubed, ready for steaming. You can buy broccoli florets without the tough stems.

A meal planner tool on the Wegmans Food Markets website (www.wegmans.com) allows customers of this northeast/mid-Atlantic supermarket chain to plan ahead, showing different prepared meal combinations with cost, calories and cups of vegetables. More retailers are likely to follow suit.

Maple-Balsamic Vinaigrette Makes 1 cup

This sweet-tart dressing is especially good on baby spinach or a mix of spring greens. It's also quite nice drizzled over the fresh asparagus that's in markets now. Double or triple the recipe to have on hand all week.

Ingredients

1 tablespoon grainy Dijon mustard
1/2 cup balsamic vinegar
1 tablespoon maple syrup
1/4 cup low-sodium soy sauce
2 tablespoons olive oil
Cracked black pepper

Preparation

1. In a small bowl, blend mustard and vinegar with a fork.
2. Blend in maple syrup and oil. Add cracked pepper to taste.
3. Store in a covered jar in the refrigerator.

Nutritional info

Per 2-tablespoon serving
55 Calories
3g fat
0g Saturated fat
0g Protein
8g Carbohydrate
0g Fiber
57mg Sodium

Source:
Healthy Living Kitchens



Copyright © 2012 Alere. All Rights Reserved.

