

A Valentine's Day Feast for You and Yours

Because the way to anyone's heart is through their stomach...Desiree Nielsen, the Choices Dietitian, has designed this Valentine's Day Feast for you to create at home. Featured are plenty of heart healthy foods, peppered with a few little indulgences to make this a truly special meal for two.

To Start the Meal...A Local Table Salmon and Watercress Salad

This protein rich and satisfying salad from our very own *A Local Table* cookbook boasts plenty of heart healthy stars. Wild salmon is a source of marine omega 3 fatty acids, EPA and DHA – well known to promote heart health as they help to lower cholesterol levels and keep artery-damaging inflammation in check. Lentils are rich in fibre, including soluble fibre, and also contain small amounts of plant sterols to help lower LDL cholesterol. This salad is also naturally low in sodium and rich in potassium to help maintain healthy blood pressure.

Method

Soak $\frac{3}{4}$ cup organic French green lentils for at least 6 hours; discard the cooking water and cook in abundant fresh water until tender (about 35 minutes). When soft, strain and set aside. This step can be done a day in advance if you like.

Preheat your oven to 375 °F. Place 150g wild salmon filet skin down on a small baking sheet. Sprinkle with the zest from $\frac{1}{4}$ of an orange, $\frac{1}{4}$ of a lemon and $\frac{1}{4}$ of a lime. Bake for 18 - 20 minutes.

In a bowl, combine lentils, the juice of $\frac{1}{2}$ a lime, 2 $\frac{1}{2}$ tbsp extra virgin olive oil and $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp freshly grated ginger. Cube baked salmon, add to the lentils and plate the salad at the last minute with 1 cup of freshly washed watercress.

Main Dish...Fettuccine with Shiitake Mushrooms and Basil

(Adapted from a recipe found on www.eatingwell.com)

One of the simplest switches you can make for your heart's sake is let go of white pasta and reach for whole wheat. Whole wheat pasta is rich in fibre and protein, filling you up faster than white. This pasta also features a light, cream free sauce to keep saturated fat in check and shiitake mushrooms. Shiitakes contain several heart healthy nutrients, including B vitamins and Eritadenine, which may help to lower cholesterol. Extra virgin olive oil is a great choice for your heart; not only does it contain plenty of monounsaturated fats to help you maintain a healthy cholesterol level, it is also highly anti-inflammatory. Garlic is another heart star!

Method

Bring a large pot of lightly salted water to a boil for the pasta.

Heat 1 tbsp extra virgin olive oil in a large non-stick skillet over low heat. Add 2 cloves minced garlic and cook, stirring, until fragrant but not brown. Add 1 cup sliced shiitake mushrooms and cook over medium

high, stirring occasionally until tender and lightly browned (4-5 minutes). Stir in 1 tsp lemon zest, 1 tbsp lemon juice, 1/8 tsp salt and freshly ground pepper to taste. Remove from heat.

Cook ½ package of whole wheat fettuccine according to package directions. Reserve 1/4 cup cooking liquid then drain pasta.

Add the pasta, reserved liquid, ¼ cup freshly grated parmesan and ¼ cup freshly chopped basil to the mushrooms. Toss to coat well and serve.

For Dessert...A fruit plate with dark chocolate fondue

Dark chocolate is actually heart healthy! The key is to choose a variety that contains at least 70% cocoa solids and is processed to help preserve its health benefits: cocoa contains polyphenols – a half of an average bar contains roughly the same level of polyphenols as a glass of red wine. One type of these polyphenols is proanthocyanidins...the same family of antioxidants found in berries. Dark chocolate, while high in fat and saturated fat, appears to have a neutral effect on blood cholesterol. One reason for this may be that a third of the fat contained in cocoa solids is oleic acid, the same heart healthy fat in olive oil! A classic pairing, citrus fruits are readily available in the winter and carry many of their own health benefits. Hesperidin, a flavanone found primarily in citrus, is a potent anti-inflammatory molecule and helps to strengthen and tone the blood vessels. Be aware that grapefruit interferes with many heart medications – if you are on any medications, replace the grapefruit with two more oranges.

Method

Section one blood orange, one ruby grapefruit and slice one banana. Arrange on a plate or small platter. Break up a Dagoba New Moon chocolate bar into a double boiler (or metal bowl that fits over a saucepan), add ¼ cup of almond milk and melt over shallow simmering water, whisking constantly. You may also use a small fondue pot and follow manufacturer directions. Place fondue in a small teacup and place on platter with fruit.

To accompany the meal...Summerhill 2006 Organic Pinot Noir

The colour of love and boasting plenty of health benefits of its own, red wine is a perfect accompaniment to a Valentine's Day meal. Research has shown that moderate intake of alcohol, which is equivalent to no more than 1 small glass of wine for women and no more than 2 small glasses for men, reduces the risk of death from all causes by about 25%. However, red wine appears to offer unique benefits that other alcohol forms do not. Grape skins and seeds, which are included in the fermentation process to make red wine, supply the building blocks for several health giving molecules in the finished beverage. Red wine contains a host of antioxidants such as anthocyanins to help lower LDL cholesterol and resveratrol, which may offer cancer protective effects. A local organic red wine such as those from Summerhill Winery is a more sustainable local option. Organic wines, produced without pesticides, may contain higher levels of antioxidants than conventionally produced wines. For a non alcoholic sparkler, try 1/3 cup Concord grape juice in club soda.

To make your life simpler....a shopping list for your feast!

1 bottle Summerhill 2006 Organic Pinot Noir

Or

1 L Concord grape Juice

1 L Club Soda

¾ cup dry organic French green lentils

1 cup fresh watercress

1 orange

1 blood (Moro) orange

1 ruby grapefruit

1 banana

1 lemon

1 lime

1 piece of fresh ginger

1 garlic bulb

Shiitake Mushrooms (approximately 1 cup or 1.5 ounces)

1 package fresh basil

150g wild salmon fillet

extra virgin olive oil

1 package whole wheat
fettuccine

1 small piece of Parmigiano
Reggiano

1 L almond milk

1 Dagoba New Moon Chocolate
Bar (or other 50g bar of dark
chocolate)