

a lifestyle resource from Food Equality Initiative

Free-From™ MAGAZINE

3

Superfood
Secret Recipes



DIAGNOSED WITH DIABETES?

You don't have
to give up all
your cultural
carbs

FOOD SECURITY VS. NUTRITION SECURITY:

Why the
difference
matters



LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

Dear Readers,

At Food Equality Initiative, food is medicine. This time last year, we were busy at work founding National Food is Medicine Day. We registered September 14th with the **National Day Archives** to declare a day of awareness to the importance of safe, regular access to nutritious food for overall health and well being. Unfortunately, there are still many barriers to accessing this nutrient dense food that families all across the United States face every single day. Barriers like transportation, cost, special dietary needs, and more.

National Food is Medicine Day calls for private enterprise, government agencies, and nonprofit organizations to join together to overcome these barriers that are a leading cause of death in the US. Every year on September 14th, we want to bring attention to the fact that access to healthy food and education about nutritious food will reduce medical costs and improve overall health for under-resourced families and individuals. Together we can remedy this food crisis by focusing on getting people the nutrient-dense food that is the medicine they need.

This issue of Free-From Magazine is curated to highlight the wonders of good food and provide ways to incorporate more good food practices into your daily life. We also break down what exactly we mean when we say Food Equality Initiative's mission is to fight for nutrition security for all.

So buckle up and get ready for some good food for thought! Happy reading!

Sofia Gillespie
Editor in Chief,
Free-From Magazine

Our Mission

Food Equality Initiative fight for nutrition security and health equity for all.

COVER DESIGN & LAYOUT

Amelia Richard
Marketing and Creative Director,
Free-From Magazine

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AN ANTI-INFLAMMATORY DIET FREE-FROM THE TOP 9

Alena Frankish | Smart Bite Solutions

Did you know that **INFLAMMATION** is an emergency or acute response from our immune system?

Inflammation is activated when our body is trying to fight infection or injury and is a completely natural and necessary process. However, we cannot be in an “emergency” state forever. If our immune system continues to be overloaded for a prolonged period of time, the inflammatory state may become “chronic.” This state tends to exhaust our body’s resources, often leading to health issues and various other chronic diseases.

We can help reduce inflammation in our bodies by changing what we eat. While an anti-inflammatory diet can be beneficial for almost anyone, as it is rooted in well-rounded, nutrient-dense ways of eating, it is particularly valuable for people with celiac disease, asthma, many types of allergies, irritable bowel syndrome, and other conditions commonly associated with chronic inflammation.

There are many variations of anti-inflammatory diets, but in general, you will be guided by basic principles of healthy eating: including more wholesome foods and avoiding heavily processed items. However, there are some foods that are particularly handy when it comes to fighting inflammation! These foods are rich in either **omega-3 fatty acids** and/or **antioxidants**.

What are omega-3 fatty acids?

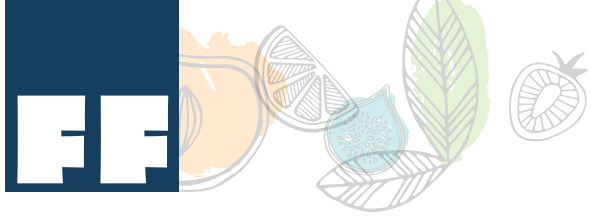
Omega-3 is an important type of fat, and is also referred to as “essential” because we need to regularly eat it to keep us healthy. Omega-3 fats are linked to a great number of health benefits, and are highly praised for their ability to lower inflammation in the body. They are also a very important part of the heart-healthy diet we talked about in [our January/February issue](#).

Although we often refer to them as simply “omega-3s,” in reality there are a few different types of these fats. All are beneficial; however, DHA (docosahexaenoic acid) seems to work best in helping to reduce inflammation. If you can eat fish, getting enough DHA will be easy! It is mainly found in fatty fish and seafood, so just make sure to eat fish twice a week to have yourself covered! Fatty fish (e.g., mackerel, salmon, herring, etc.) is a particularly great choice.

If you can’t eat fish or just want some extra ideas, here is a list for plant-based sources of omega-3s:

- Chia seeds (also try ground flaxseeds or hemp seeds)
- Seaweed and algae (be careful with cross-contact if you are allergic to fish / seafood)
- Edamame beans
- Kidney beans
- Walnuts (if no nut allergy)
- Brussels sprouts





Omega-3 supplements are also an option, especially if you have multiple allergies. Talk to your dietitian or physician to see if you can take vegan algae-based supplements. However, keep in mind that this is an extra expense that most people won't need. Besides, scientists found that DHA from foods seems to lower inflammation much better than store-bought supplements!

What are antioxidants?

Antioxidants are special molecules that have the ability to fight and “neutralize” certain damaging compounds in your body called free radicals. Without antioxidants, free radicals can travel around, damage healthy cells, and promote inflammation.

You can find antioxidants as a supplement. However, just as with omega-3s and many other nutrients, they work much better if you get them directly from food.

There are so many different types of antioxidants to choose from! Anthocyanin, for example, is an antioxidant found in blue and purple berries. Sulforaphane can be found in cruciferous green vegetables, such as broccoli or cabbage. Some people even call broccoli “an anti-inflammatory powerhouse.” Another potent scavenger of free radicals, lycopene, can be found in red foods, such as strawberries or tomatoes.

But, how can you remember which is which, so as to make sure you get them all? It's really hard! Instead, I often suggest simply to include as many different plant-based colors as possible in your meals and snacks. Use a variety of fruits and vegetables to make snacks, soups, side dishes, smoothies, and so much more. To reduce the cost, buy fresh, frozen or canned varieties, depending on what is available in your store and what is in season.



You can further boost your health and help to reduce inflammation through the use of spices.

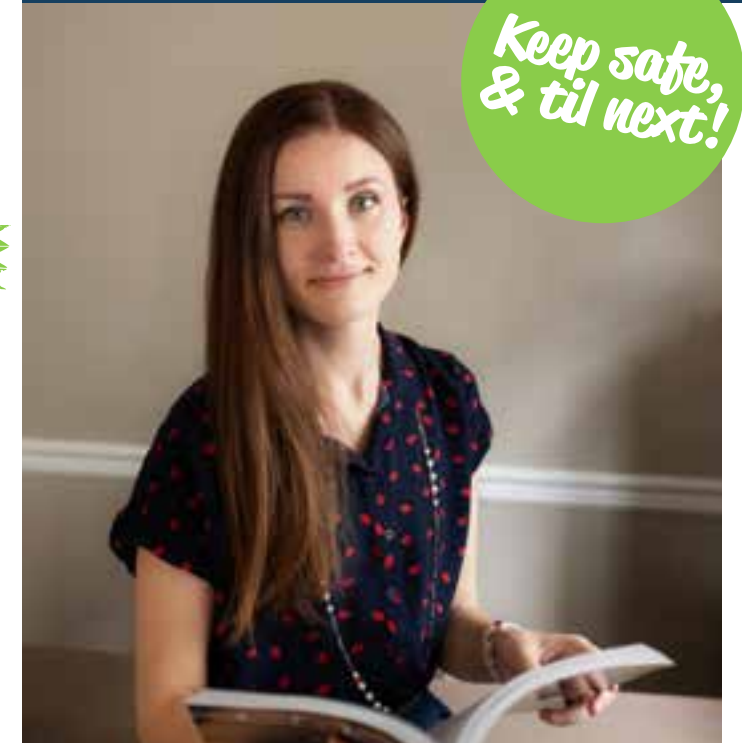
Many spices contain good amounts of powerful antioxidants and will also add unique tastes to your dishes. Cinnamon, ginger, garlic, hot chili peppers, and turmeric are amongst the most popular spices, and have been praised for their healing and anti-inflammatory properties for centuries. Some scientists believe that blending turmeric with black pepper (that has great anti-inflammatory and antioxidant properties of its own) can make an even more powerful healing mix! Luckily, pure spices are also top allergen-free and naturally gluten-free, so give it a go! [For a creative way to spice up your mornings, check out this recipe for Golden Milk.](#)

And you know what else?

Cacao is also incredibly rich in antioxidants. So, if you like chocolate, don't forget to occasionally treat yourself with a piece of good quality dark chocolate (70% and higher for more benefits). 🍫

PRO TIP: Many antioxidants are heat-sensitive, meaning that after cooking, some of them will be lost. However, this is not always the case. Either way, all these wholesome foods are so packed with anti-inflammatory compounds that even prolonged heating won't destroy them all completely, so enjoy your foods both raw and cooked!

Keep safe, & til next!



ABOUT ALENA

Alena is a family dietitian, nutrition writer, photographer, and certified kids' yoga teacher. She is also the founder of Smart Bite Solutions, an online nutrition support network for people with food allergies and celiac disease. She herself is living with severe food allergies and is passionate about helping people understand and better manage adverse food reactions.

MANAGING DIABETES DOES NOT MEAN LEAVING BEHIND CULTURAL FOOD TRADITIONS

Krista Linares | Nutrition con Sabor

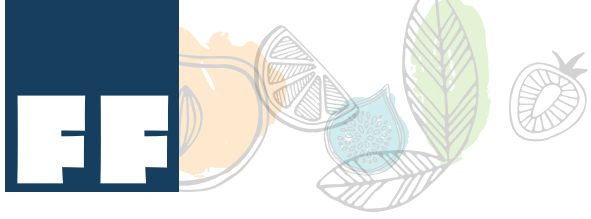
After a diabetes diagnosis, many Latino patients have a moment where they feel all their favorite foods are off limits: rice and beans, tortillas, tamales, all the favorites...

That could not be further from the truth! Our food culture *can* sustain well-being and diabetes management by promoting healthy habits such as eating legumes, adding vegetables for flavor, and sharing a meal with family. This article will explore some of the ways patients with diabetes can incorporate their Latino cultural food traditions into a diabetes management plan.

The statistics about diabetes

Latinos are disproportionately affected by diabetes.

Approximately 12.5% of Latinos have diabetes, compared to 7.5% of non-Hispanic White adults. The reasons Latinos are more likely to develop diabetes are complex, and include socio-economic issues like access to healthcare.



On top of that, Latinos may also have a harder time managing their diabetes. Part of the difficulty in managing diabetes for Latinos is navigating traditional diabetes management advice with Latino culture and food. It's common for Latinos to feel like their cultural foods don't work with conventional diabetes management. Many times people with diabetes think they are no longer able to enjoy foods with carbohydrates, and for Latinos they feel this means they can no longer eat cultural staples like rice, tortillas, or plantains, for example.

However, it's important to keep in mind that all food traditions have plenty of nutrition to offer and Latino food isn't any different. It is absolutely possible for Latinos to manage diabetes without giving up their favorite foods or disconnecting from their cultural roots.

What messages are Latinos receiving about managing diabetes?

While tools such as the Diabetes Plate by the **American Diabetes Association** allow for a serving of carbohydrates at meals, it's common for people with diabetes to receive messages that very low carbohydrate diets, such as the ketogenic diet, are the answer. Recommendations to remove or seriously reduce carbohydrate intake can be particularly stressful for Latinos because of the cultural and emotional significance of staple foods like corn masa (used to make corn tortillas), plantains, rice, and other starchy vegetables. Additionally, beans are a very healthy food containing both carbohydrates and protein, but many people with diabetes have been advised to limit beans due to the fact that they contain carbohydrates.

This messaging affects how Latinos feel about themselves and their ability to manage or prevent diabetes. **One study assessing Latinas' attitudes toward diabetes prevention** indicated that Latinas commonly feel their culture shapes their food preferences, which makes

managing or preventing diabetes seem difficult. **The most common diabetes advice, instead of proving helpful, is making Latinos feel like they have to choose between their health and their culture.**

In addition to being distressing, this messaging is simply untrue. It's false partially because it's based on an incomplete view of what Latin food is, as well as because it's based on the false assumption that all carbohydrates are bad for diabetes.

One of the most effective dietary patterns for preventing and managing Type 2 Diabetes-**the Mediterranean Diet**,- features a moderate amount of complex carbohydrates. The Mediterranean Diet **has been shown in some studies** to reduce HbA1c (a measure of blood sugar control over three months) in people with Type 2 Diabetes. This dietary pattern isn't just good for managing diabetes; however, it may also play a role in preventing diabetes in the first place. People who more closely followed a Mediterranean Diet, **one study showed**, had a lower risk of developing Type 2 Diabetes.

However, the Mediterranean Diet does not strictly mean Mediterranean food. The Mediterranean Diet is a pattern that can be found in many different cultures, characterized by high intake of legumes like beans, vegetables, whole grains, and fish. All of these foods can be found in Latino cultural diets.



Which Latino Foods Can Be Beneficial for Diabetes?

Many Latino staples are great for managing diabetes.

- **Beans and other legumes (like lentils and garbanzos)** are commonly eaten daily in Latino food culture. Beans can improve blood sugar control as well as reduce risk of **cardiovascular disease** in people with diabetes. Additionally, adding beans to a food like rice can reduce the total increase in **blood sugar** that comes from eating rice. This is likely due to the fiber and protein found in beans.
- **Staple carbohydrates like corn tortillas and starchy vegetables** are rich sources of fiber, vitamins, and minerals. Choosing high fiber carbohydrate sources allows patients with diabetes to enjoy carbohydrates with a lesser impact on their blood sugar.
- **Vegetables** are frequently used in Latino food to add flavor. For example, beans may be cooked in an onion and tomato sofrito, or fresh salsa can be added to tacos at the table, just to name two. These small servings of vegetables add up and can contribute a good amount of fiber, which is important for blood sugar control in diabetes.





What Can Latinos Do to Manage Diabetes While Enjoying Cultural Foods?

While many Latino staples are beneficial for diabetes, there are some additional ways Latinos can tweak their meals to improve blood sugar and manage diabetes.

- **Combine carbohydrates with fiber:** Just like the rice and beans example earlier, adding fiber to your favorite carbohydrate sources can help improve your body's response to those carbohydrates. Examples include rice and beans, beans with tortillas, tostada with avocado, or even chips and guacamole! Want to take it a step further? Try choosing carbohydrates that are already fiber sources. Think whole grains like corn tortillas or quinoa, or starchy vegetables like sweet potato, boniato, and cassava.
- **Complete your plate with protein:** Similar to fiber, protein in a meal helps reduce your overall blood sugar response and leaves you feeling full between meals. Try adding a protein to your favorite carbohydrates. Beans or meat with tortillas is an easy example, but fruit and nuts is another great option. Fun fact - the combination of rice and beans also provides a complete protein, which is important, too!
- **Find ways to increase your vegetables:** Latino food commonly has smaller servings of vegetables as garnishes or mixed into food. Try to increase these serving sizes! If you normally add cabbage to your pozole, try adding radishes, too! If you normally make asopao with potato and corn, could you also add in some carrots?

It's important to keep in mind that all food traditions have plenty of nutrition to offer...

The Bottom Line

It's easy to feel that a diabetes diagnosis means abandoning cultural staples. But these foods can definitely fit into a well managed diabetes meal plan. Latino food has a lot of nutrition to offer, and cultural staples like beans and starchy vegetables can be a great source of the fiber we need to help manage blood sugar for diabetics and prevent developing other diseases like cardiovascular disease. 🍏



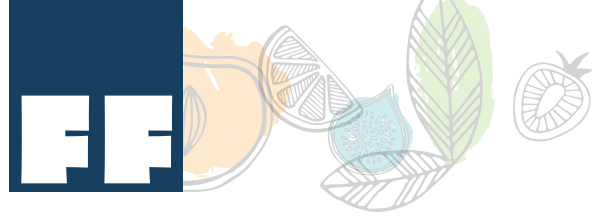
ABOUT KRISTA

Krista Linares, MPH, RDN is a registered dietitian nutritionist specializing in serving the nutrition needs of the Latino community, especially when it comes to education about type 2 diabetes management and polycystic ovarian syndrome. Through her private practice, Nutrition con Sabor, she strives to see Latino health professionals better represented in the nutrition and wellness world, promote health equity, and share culturally relevant and accessible nutrition advice for her Latino clients.

THE GAP BETWEEN FOOD SECURITY AND NUTRITION SECURITY

Tory Blosser





Here at Food Equality Initiative, our **mission** is to fight for nutrition security and health equity for all.

Food insecurity affects **42 million Americans** right now. But, what about nutrition insecurity? What is the difference between the two? What exactly is FEI fighting for? Let's take a look at what you need to know in the field of food and nutrition security, types of assistance programs, and ways you can help.

What is the Difference: Food vs. Nutrition Security?

Food security: all people at all times have both physical and economic access to sufficient food that meet dietary needs and do not live in hunger.

Nutrition security: having consistent access to safe, affordable, and healthy foods with nutrients essential to optimal health and well-being.

Although food security is a necessity, nutrition security builds on food security to further ensure access to foods that are not just calories but nutritional calories, to support health and manage or prevent diseases.

An example of food security would be if a person was given a package of microwaveable noodles and a can of soda for a meal. Yes, it is technically food. However, there are few elements in that meal to provide the body with sufficient energy and nutrients it needs to sustain healthy functions. Nutrition security is access to a balanced meal full of micro/macro nutrients that sustain and provide nutritional value to the body.



Who is Affected?

Food insecurity can be influenced by a range of factors such as: income, employment, race/ethnicity, location, and disability or disease. The Pandemic has made it more difficult than ever for families and individuals to afford and have secure access to nutrition. According to **Feeding America**, more than 35 million people in the United States, including 11 million children, were food insecure before the Pandemic in 2019. That number has grown to an estimated 42 million people suffering from food insecurity in 2022.

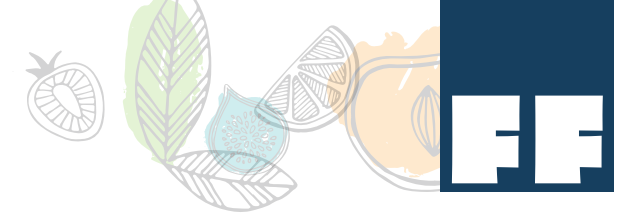
According to the **USDA**, single mothers below the poverty line are at the highest risk of nutrition insecurity. Furthermore, 35% of households with incomes below the poverty line were considered to be food-insecure.

History of Food Insecurity in Food Assistance

With food insecurity rates steadily increasing, **food assistance** between a variety of private and public programs have also increased in demand. The first federally organized food programs in the United States date back to the Great Depression and have provided help for countless families and individuals in need. Basic programs and assistance include soup kitchens, food pantries, and **governmental assistance programs** like SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program) and WIC (Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children).

Private Food programs:

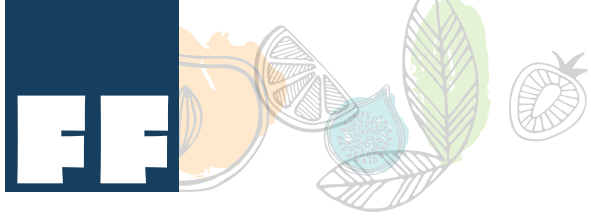
- **Soup kitchens** became widely known during the late **1920s**, offering a hot meal, usually soup and bread, to hungry individuals. Mainly run by churches, private charities, and volunteers, soup kitchens were extremely crucial during **the Great Depression**, because these meals were cheap and could feed many people. This is an example of ensuring food security, but not necessarily nutritional security.
- **Food pantries** provide non-perishable and canned goods from food banks for people to make meals with at home. Pantries can be located in a specific area, such as a school or church, or operate as a mobile pantry to meet those in need where they are. There are many different models for food pantries, some passing out pre-grouped food items while others offer more choice. Food Equality Initiative started as a specialty food pantry, focusing on providing items that were free-from the top 9 allergens to families in need diagnosed with food allergies and/or celiac disease.



- **Food banks** were first established in the U.S. in 1967, but were not widely used until the 1980s. Food banks locate low-cost food to distribute to agencies and organizations listed above. Think - food banks are the “warehouse/suppliers,” food pantries are the individual “grocery stores.”

All three of these private programs are largely focused on relieving food insecurity. While they may assist with lowering hunger in the short-term, they are not necessarily building education around the importance of nutrition and supplying nutrient-dense food to the population they serve.





Government Assistance Programs:

- **Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)** allots a monthly dollar amount to eligible individuals on an Electronic Benefits Transfer (EBT) card based on your monthly income. The EBT card is accepted in most grocery stores and **farmer's markets**. (Some farmer's markets even double your allotted money on fresh produce.) To be **eligible for SNAP**, you must apply and meet your state's specific income requirement.
- **Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC)** is exclusively available to women who are pregnant, breastfeeding, postpartum, or have children 5-years-old or younger. Unlike SNAP, WIC does not provide a general allowance. Instead, the USDA says "WIC participants receive benefits to purchase items from a food package tailored to their specific nutritional needs." Additionally, the program provides nutrition education, breastfeeding support, and referrals to other health/social services based on your current situation.

Along with SNAP and WIC, food services within the **Child Nutrition Programs** are available. **The National School Lunch Program (NSLP)** provides low-cost or free meals to school children. NSLP has similar programs including the **Summer Food Service Program** and **Child and Adult Care Food Program**, providing children with nutritious food while school is in session and during the summer months. Similarly, the **School Breakfast Program** allows for schools to provide breakfast in schools and residential childcare institutions.

Barriers to Accessing Nutritious Food

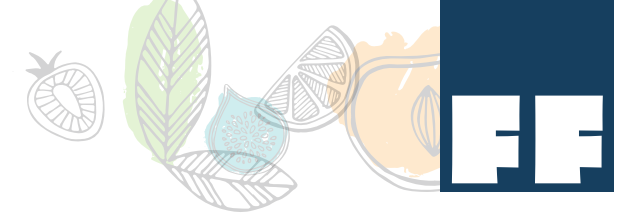
Although soup kitchens and food pantries are fairly accessible, nutrition security is not always fulfilled with the food provided. Adding in any type of dietary-restriction only makes it harder to meet nutritional goals. Unfortunately there are a lot of **barriers** to accessing safe, nutritious foods:

- **Food Deserts & Food Swamps:** A food desert means that there are not enough grocery stores with nutritious, fresh food options within a certain distance, whether it be rural or urban. Food swamps mean that non-nutritious options, like fast-food restaurants, outnumber the healthy options. A new term being used to describe this situation is **food apartheid**, meaning that it was calculated and a product of a racially-biased system instead of a natural occurrence.
- **Expense of Special Dietary Foods:** The price of fresh and nutritional foods are often **higher in price** and therefore out of budget for many people on a limited income. Additionally, those with dietary conditions like celiac disease or food allergies require free-from (ex: gluten-free) products that are significantly more costly. These items are often not available at food pantries, soup kitchens, or even in federal assistance programs.
- **Resources & Time:** Education resources on nutrition are difficult to come by, especially in underfunded and low-income areas. Many food and nutrition insecure individuals may also lack transportation resources to help transport foods, resulting in settling for only what can be carried. Additionally, many people work late hours or overtime, leading to quick and non-nutritious meals like fast-food or convenient boxed or frozen meals, which are heavily processed.

1 Loaf bread	\$3.29
1 Jar peanut butter	\$2.89
1 Jar jelly	\$2.84
1 Box pasta	\$1.84
1 Jar pasta sauce	\$2.10
1 Box muffin mix	\$2.97
1 Dozen eggs	\$3.99
TOTAL:	\$19.92

1 Loaf bread	\$10.56
1 Jar seed spread	\$8.69
1 Jar jelly	\$3.69
1 Box pasta	\$3.39
1 Jar pasta sauce	\$5.99
1 Box muffin mix	\$4.69
1 Dozen egg substitute	\$8.43
TOTAL:	\$45.44

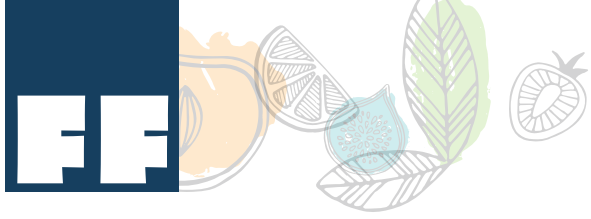
DIFFERENCE: \$25.52



How Can I Help?

Nutrition insecurity is more pervasive than you may think. Education, access, and advocacy are the three major components that need to be addressed to fight this issue. Education of general nutrition and how to make healthy food choices. Access to multiple nutritious food options, physically and financially. Advocacy to fight for more regulation for food manufacturers to ensure our food is clean, and nutritious. By supporting organizations like FEI, where our 3 pillars are Access, Education, and Advocacy, you are helping fight for nutrition security across the United States.

For National Food is Medicine Day, September 14th, consider **donating financially** or volunteering time at a local food pantry. 🍎



ADVOCACY AISLE

PSYCHOSOCIAL ISSUES IN FOOD ALLERGY

Kathy Downing | Food Equality Initiative

When my daughter was just over a year old, I decided to share my cashew bar with her. I was curious to see if she would like it. She took a small bite, and immediately her facial expression changed from her typical attentive, happy-go-lucky look, to a disengaged stare. Her cheeks flushed.

I gave her a glass of water. We were lucky.

Within a few minutes, she started to look like herself again. I called her doctor, who said it sounded like she had experienced an allergic reaction.

We avoided cashew after that, and filled a prescription for an epinephrine auto-injector.. Despite suddenly becoming “first responders” to a potential future medical emergency, my husband and I received little information on how to manage and cope with our daughter’s food allergy on a practical, day-to-day level. We did our best to keep her safe as she grew up; but, admittedly, several accidental allergen exposures did occur. Afterwards, I felt as if I had failed her.

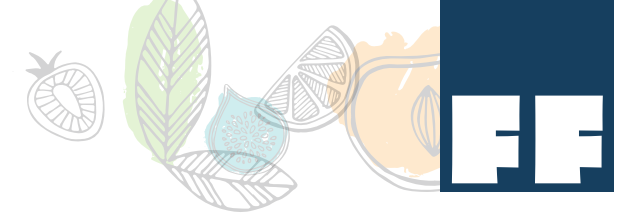
Fast-forward to present day, and I’m working for Food Equality Initiative, attending a webinar called Psychosocial Issues in Food Allergy. The presenter Gianine Rosenblum, PhD, is sharing information I wish I had heard 20 years ago.

Now I am further sharing this information with you, because what benefits one food allergy family, benefits all of us:

Put simply, “Food allergy is a chronic stressor,” says Rosenblum, who is a licensed psychologist and food allergy mom who helps individuals and families cope with life-threatening food allergies.

“The level of vigilance required to manage food allergy is very high, and that vigilance requires energy, attention, and concentration, all of which are fatiguing and draining and create stress.”

In addition, says Rosenblum, “there is not a ton of social support out there for people with food allergies. People misunderstand, people dismiss and invalidate, people are disbelieving that food allergies even exist.”



Then there is food allergy bullying - bullying among children in school settings and other environments, and also bullying among adults. For example, Facebook groups that are dedicated to families with food allergies are replete with stories of hostility, sarcasm, and people making food allergies the target of jokes, explains Rosenblum. This creates a high cost psychologically to food allergy families.

A growing number of doctors and mental health professionals are trying to understand the scale of the problem and how to best support food allergy patients and their caregivers who experience issues like bullying, depression, and anxiety stemming from the condition. To start, we need more mental health professionals with allergy expertise.

“For good reasons, the food allergic community behaves, in words and actions, as if we are under constant threat of death,” writes Rosenblum.

“To address this systemic issue, adults need help with their anxiety, so the transmission of this anxiety to children is reduced,” she continues. “Parents must be helped to learn communication strategies other than fear for teaching safety to their children. Children must be given developmentally graded information, so when they are old enough to understand risk, they can learn the facts, and not unnecessarily restrict their lives. Adolescents and adults need help with social and emotional skills to reduce the embarrassment from calling attention to their food allergy needs, lest they choose to compromise safety in favor of social comfort.”

“Thorough education is needed about identifying anaphylaxis so uncertainty doesn’t hinder emergency response. Increased comfort with epinephrine administration via strategies like role play and needle-phobia reduction training, can reduce anxiety about implementing safety plans. Adolescent and adult patients and caregivers should be able to envision themselves implementing those safety plans unhesitatingly and with authority.”

Social support, psychotherapy, and other stress reduction tools that improve coping and reduce anxiety should be available to all.

Along those lines, Tamara Hubbard, a food allergy mom and therapist in Long Grove, Illinois, started a [Food Allergy Counselor website](#) to connect food allergy patients and families with sympathetic, allergy-aware mental health professionals.

Rosenblum also offers a training course for mental health professionals through the Allergy & Asthma Network that guides participants to become certified Food Allergy Coaches. [Click here for more information and to register.](#)

And, another bright note - efforts are being made to address bullying. FARE, for example, made a public-service announcement called ‘It’s Not a Joke’ to raise public awareness. The organization also has an educational program called Be a PAL (Protect A Life) to teach kids how they can support friends with food allergies. 🍏



3 WAYS TO SNEAK SUPERFOODS INTO YOUR DIET

Zoë Slaughter | Invisibly Allergic

What Is A Superfood?

You've likely heard the term "superfood" being thrown around at some point, but what does it actually mean? How does a food get the label superfood? Those are excellent questions that we do not really have a good answer for. Superfoods aren't their own food category and there are no specific requirements for defining them.

The best way to classify superfoods is to say that they are generally recognized for being naturally nutrient-dense. And, chances are, you may already be eating a few of them regularly.

Some examples of common superfoods are:

- Avocados
- Berries
- Lentils
- Beets
- Dark, Leafy Greens
- Cinnamon
- Chia Seeds
- Garlic
- Ginger
- Pumpkin

Are Superfoods Important?

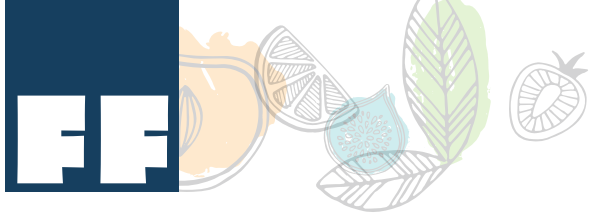
According to UC Davis, "while science supports the health benefits of certain foods, elevating them to the level of a 'superfood,' it is clear the term is more useful for its marketing value than providing ultimate nutrition. This becomes problematic, however, when people focus on the marketing versus the specific food's actual nutritional value."

In other words, it is important to look past the 'hype' and focus on what actually fulfills your nutritional needs. Foods that we can consider superfoods are rich in antioxidants, fiber, unsaturated fats, and important vitamins & minerals. All of these elements are necessary for our bodies to function and maintain overall well being.

It is always a good idea to do research into your food: find out its nutritional value, serving size, and production process. Answers to these questions should help inform you what to buy and how much of any particular item you should consume. When you start thinking about food as medicine to prevent or even treat disease, what foods you put into your body becomes even more important.

The superfoods listed earlier are universally recognized and have multiple proven health benefits. If you are not already incorporating them in your day-to-day diet, here are some ways you can start to sneak them in.





3 Ways to Sneak Superfoods into Your Diet

Smoothies

Smoothies are an excellent way to sneak superfoods into your diet to make your food intake supercharged with nutritional value. You may already have heard of people throwing spinach or avocado into their smoothies, and now you know why! These “savory” flavors pair nicely with fruits and other common smoothie ingredients such as yogurt, chia seeds, protein powders, and alternative milks.



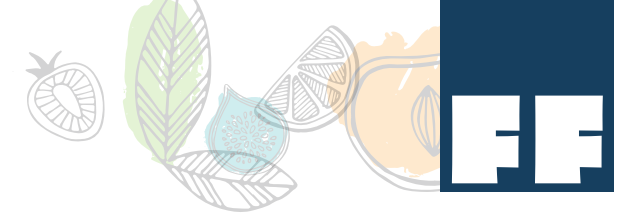
Baked Goods

Adding avocado, cinnamon, or cooked lentils to your next batch of homemade brownies actually wouldn't be a stretch! Why not make your baked goods a bit more nutrient dense and healthy by adding in some superfoods? If that's too much for you, next time you're making a zucchini bread loaf or carrot cake, try adding cinnamon & finely grated ginger, or dried berries. Even adding these superfoods into your oatmeal cookies is a sneaky way to include some into your daily meals.



Salads

Salads can mean both green salads or fruit salads. Adding berries to a green salad is an excellent way to add an additional tart or sweet element to round out and add additional flavor. I particularly love adding cherries, either fresh or dried, to my salads. Taking a more savory route, adding freshly chopped garlic and finely grated ginger to your salad dressing is a way to punch up the flavor and get those extra antioxidants and benefits in! Lentils and avocado are a natural fit as an ingredient to be added to a savory green salad. Not to mention, you can make a delicious “massaged” kale salad, using kale instead of lettuce as your green. 🍏



Massaged Kale Salad

INGREDIENTS

- Kale
- 1 Tbsp Extra virgin olive oil
- 1-2 Tbsp Lemon juice or vinegar

DIRECTIONS

- Wash your kale & remove the big stems.
- Rip it up small or chop it into bite-sized pieces.
- In a large bowl, add a tablespoon of extra virgin olive oil, or your oil of choice. Massage the kale with your hands until it's all coated in the oil.
- Add in a tablespoon or two of lemon juice or vinegar and massage it until it's all well-incorporated. Viola! You have a delicious superfood salad ready for any other fixings, or ready to be enjoyed on its own!



ABOUT ZOË

Zoë Slaughter resides in Louisville, KY and has a severe airborne and cross-contact reactive peanut allergy. In her free time she enjoys spending time with her rescue beagle, reading, painting and creating art, and recently started playing tennis. She started a blog called Invisibly Allergic in 2017 that is dedicated to living with severe food allergies. You can check it out here: invisiblyallergic.com

FRESH FROM THE GARDEN TO THE TABLE

HOMEMADE FRESH SALSA WITH CHICKPEA CRACKERS

Renee Simeon | [Off The Wheaten Path](#)

For me, when it comes to eating healthy, it starts with the quality of ingredients we put into our bodies.

For many years I suffered with all sorts of allergies, in addition to my gluten intolerance, until my doctor recommended that I go on an all-natural, more organic diet and eliminate foods that could be harmful to my body. Since then, I have traded store bought for homegrown and my allergies have significantly reduced - reinforcing for me the term food is medicine. Not only am I healthier, but growing veggies from home is both better for the environment and more nutritious for me, as I know completely what is going into the food that I am eating (no pesticides or other chemicals).

Growing your own food surely isn't something new, but it has become a real trend recently as more and more people work from home. All over the place, we can see people starting little kitchen gardens on their windowsills, balconies, or backyards. Growing food at home has always been a part of my life; as a child, my grandmother would take me into the garden and I would help her as she planted tomatoes, peppers, and all sorts of herbs and veggies.

Although she is no longer with us, her love for gardening was passed down to my father and me, and we have been growing all sorts of produce such as parsley, basil, lettuce, kale, and (my favorite) tomatoes. On some days we can harvest as many as 3 pounds of tomatoes from one plant, so I am always on the lookout for recipes that make them shine.

One of my favorites is fresh salsa. There is nothing like a vine-ripened tomato combined with fresh herbs from the garden; it is a real treat. The only thing that makes it better is when I serve it with some chickpea crackers, a bit of a culinary change from the traditional corn chips.

Fortunately, living in the Caribbean, we can grow our own produce almost all year round. I know that isn't possible for everyone, so here are a few tips I use when shopping for herbs and veggies at the store.

- 1. Use the dirty dozen and clean fifteen list when shopping for fruits and veggies.** The **dirty dozen** list refers to fruits and veggies that farmers use the most pesticides on - items like strawberries, spinach, apples, and tomatoes. Conversely, the **clean fifteen** list refers to produce that farmers use the least amount of pesticides on - items like avocados, corn, onions, and mushrooms. Pesticides have been known to cause health issues, so the less you consume, the better.
- 2. Buy items in season.** Not only is it cheaper, but the produce tastes better, too. Imported produce isn't picked at its peak, so it can be lacking in flavor.
- 3. Shop at your local farmer's market.** When you shop at farmer's markets, you can talk to the farmers, support local businesses, and ask questions about what you're buying - like what pest control and fertilizer they use.
- 4. Finally, read and research on your own.** There is so much helpful information out there, online and in library books, that can guide you as to where to shop, how to shop, and how you can grow your own produce at home even if you don't have much space.

If you ever get the chance to grow your own tomatoes or get a fresh batch at the grocery store or farmer's market, I hope you give this chickpea cracker and fresh salsa recipe a try. It is a great way to get started on eating healthy and turning your food into medicine for your body. 🍅

FRESH SALSA & CHICKPEA CRACKERS

Off The Wheaten Path

INGREDIENTS

FOR THE SALSA

- 1½ lbs Tomatoes, fresh & diced
- ½ cup Red onion, diced
- 1 clove Garlic, diced
- 2 Tbsp Lime juice
- ½ cup Cilantro, chopped
- Pinch of Cumin
- Pinch of Oregano
- Salt and pepper, to taste
- Optional: 1 Jalapeño pepper, stems and ribs removed

FOR THE CRACKERS

- 1 cup Chickpea flour
- 1 tsp Baking powder
- ¼ tsp Salt
- ¼ tsp Cracked black pepper
- Pinch of Garlic powder
- 2 Tbsp Coconut oil, melted
- 3-4 Tbsp Warm water

DIRECTIONS

TO MAKE SALSA

- Add the chopped tomatoes, onion, garlic, and jalapeño to a bowl. Using a spoon, mix well.
- Next, add the tomato mixture to a food processor fitted with the chop blade. Add in the chopped cilantro and lime juice. Pulse a few times until the salsa resembles a fine chop, not a puree. If you don't have a food processor, you can dice the ingredients finely by hand.

- Transfer the tomato mixture to a bowl, add cumin and oregano. Stir to combine, then season with salt and pepper to taste. Transfer to a serving bowl and chill while you make the crackers.

TO MAKE THE CRACKERS

- Preheat oven to 350°F. Tear two pieces of parchment paper. Place one on your work surface then set the other piece aside until ready to use.
- In a medium bowl, sift together the chickpea flour, baking powder, garlic powder, salt, and pepper to remove any lumps.
- Add the melted coconut oil along with 3 tablespoons of water. Using a wooden spoon or your hands, mix until a dough forms. If the dough is dry and not coming together, add a little more water a teaspoon at a time until it does.
- Place the dough onto the piece of parchment paper on your work surface. Flatten into a disc then cover with the other piece of parchment. Using a rolling pin, roll until as thin as possible. The thinner the dough, the crispier the cracker. Note: It is important you roll between the two pieces of parchment paper as the dough will stick to your rolling pin.
- Once you've rolled it as thin as possible, remove the top sheet of parchment paper, cut into triangles, then carefully transfer the dough along with the parchment paper to a baking tray.
- Bake for 12-15 minutes, until the edges are golden.
- Let cool slightly before serving. Store the leftover crackers in an airtight container.





SWEET AND SAVORY AVOCADO TOAST

Amelia Richard

This is my rendition of the popular millennial brunch dish - Avocado Toast. I have spent many yummy breakfasts over the past year perfecting my own recipe. I am happy with the result, and I make this at least once a week for my 4 ½ year old daughter and me.

INGREDIENTS

AVOCADO SPREAD

2 Small Avocados, mashed
1 Tbsp Fresh lime juice – half of a lime
½ tsp Everything bagel seasoning

FRIED EGG

2 Large Eggs
Pinch of salt and pepper
Unrefined coconut oil, enough to cover the bottom of your skillet

TOAST

2 Slices Whole grain bread
2 tsp Honey, 1 tsp for each slice of toast
1 Tbsp Butter
Handful Arugula
Sprinkling Everything bagel seasoning
The other half of the lime

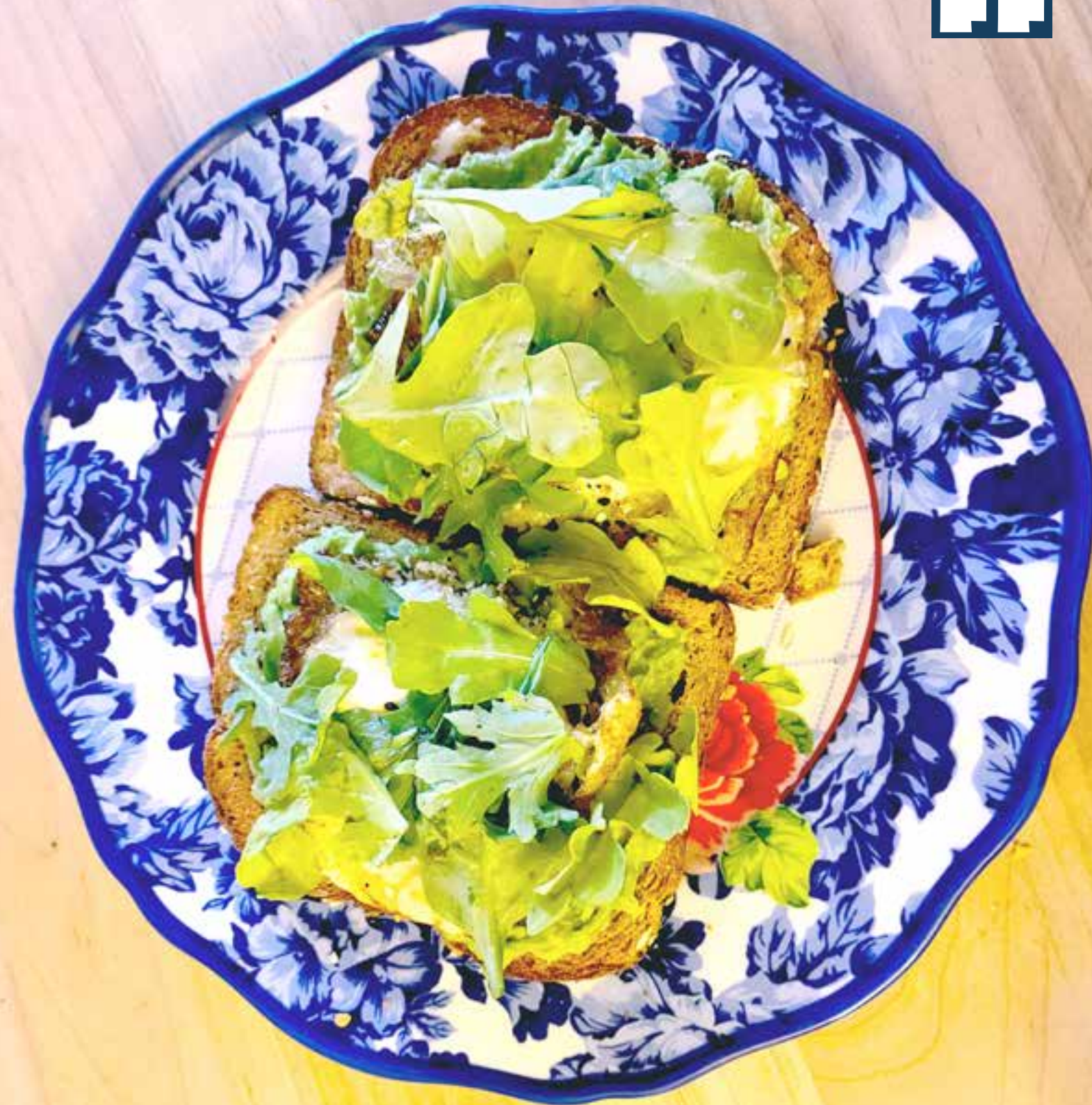
DIRECTIONS

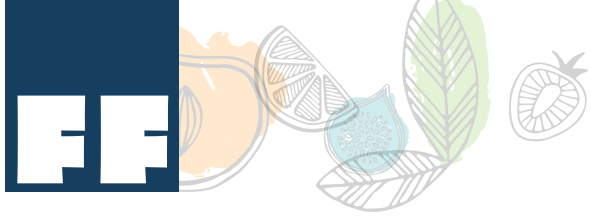
- Mix together the avocado spread in a small bowl and set aside.
- Heat your skillet on medium heat for a couple of minutes before you put the coconut oil in so that it melts quickly and heats up evenly.

- Crack the eggs into a small bowl. You can do both in one bowl and fry them at the same time. I like to sprinkle a little salt and pepper on them before cooking them.
- Slowly and carefully pour the eggs into the hot oil and let them fry for about 3-5 minutes depending on how crispy you like the bottom.
- While the eggs are frying, get your bread toasted to the level you prefer.
- When done, take eggs off the heat and set them aside.

ASSEMBLY

- Spread butter on each piece of toast. Drizzle with honey.
- Distribute half of the Avocado Spread on each piece of toast. Split your fried eggs into 2 equal parts with one yolk on each piece and place those on each of the toast.
- Sprinkle a little more of the Everything Bagel seasoning. Top with arugula and drizzle with juice from the other half of the lime. Enjoy immediately!





FRIENDLY PASTA

Sofia Gillespie

My friends and I developed this recipe when we discovered just how many dietary restrictions we have in our group. Between the three of us, we have two vegans, two allergic to nuts, and one allergic to wheat. This recipe accommodates all of those restrictions and is also fresh and delicious!

Servings 4

INGREDIENTS

4 cups Rotini pasta, gluten free
1-2 cups Cherry tomatoes
2-4 cups Spinach
1-2 Tbsp Olive oil
¼-1 tsp Red pepper flakes (more equals spicier)
2-3 tsp Italian seasoning - or 2-4 Tbsp fresh herbs, if you have them (rosemary, basil, etc)
Salt and pepper, to taste

DIRECTIONS

- Cook the pasta according to the directions on the box.
- While the pasta is cooking, slice the cherry tomatoes in half. Rip/cut your spinach in half.
- Once the pasta is ready, drain it and put it back on the stove on low heat. Drizzle in a bit of olive oil, enough to make all of your noodles wet. Sprinkle in your spices and stir. (Feel free to add other spices as desired. This is a basic recipe that is easily customizable to your tastes.)
- Next, add in your tomatoes and a couple handfuls of the spinach, stir constantly. If there is not enough space in your pot for all the spinach, just wait - with the heat, the spinach should shrivel up, giving you space to add more.
- Once the spinach is shriveled to your liking and the tomatoes have released their juices, it is done! Distribute evenly and enjoy!





DATE SWEET TREAT

Erin Martinez

A quick, easy, satisfying, and even nourishing treat, where each ingredient brings different nutrients to the table. Medjool dates are low-glycemic and sweetly packed with fiber, B vitamins, magnesium, and other micronutrients. Nut and seed butters contain protein. Chocolate is delicious—using a high cacao percentage will ensure more nutritional content than a lower cacao percentage. Nutrients in cacao include magnesium, zinc, and iron, which support healthy brains and bones. Coconut oil is a nutritious oil choice, thanks to the medium-chain triglycerides (MCTs) that help provide energy and reduce hunger. Coconut oil also plays a practical role in helping the melted chocolate solidify when chilled.

INGREDIENTS

2-3 Medjool dates
 1-2 Tbsp Peanut, almond, or seed butter
 2-3 Tbsp Chocolate chips
 1 Tbsp Coconut Oil
 Flaky sea salt (optional)

DIRECTIONS

- Split the dates open with a knife or your thumbs—being careful not to separate the two halves, but just open the date like a hotdog bun—and remove the pits.
- In place of the pit, use a spoon to drop some nut or seed butter in the center of the date. Gently squeeze the date most of the way closed.
- Place a small handful of chocolate chips and a small spoonful of coconut oil into a microwave safe bowl and warm in 10-15 second intervals, stirring between each warming, until melted.
- Dip the filled dates into the melted chocolate or drizzle the chocolate over the top. Sprinkle the tops with flaky sea salt. (If you'd rather not melt the chocolate, simply place chocolate chips on top of the nut or seed butter in the center of the date then sprinkle with a pinch of sea salt.)
- Either enjoy immediately or chill first to solidify the chocolate.





300 E 39th Street
Kansas City, MO 64111



(816) 800 - 0884



contact@foodequalityinitiative.org

WWW.FOODEQUALITYINITIATIVE.ORG