

# Guide to Healthy Eating

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## **The Benefits of Healthy Eating**

Healthy eating is one of the best things that we can do for our body. By giving ourselves the nourishment that we need, we are able to live a fuller and more vital life. There are a lot of benefits that could be derived from healthy eating. For people intent on losing weight, eating a well-balanced diet coupled with plenty of exercise are the most sensible steps they can take. Crash diets usually do not work in the long term. Although they may help people lose weight very quickly, it has been observed frequently that this very people rapidly regain the pounds they have lost. Sometimes, they even end up heavier than when they started their crash diets. Healthy eating habits, however, provide the long-term solution to fluctuating weight control problems.<sup>1</sup>

Healthy eating also gives us a better skin tone. In fact, what we put on our plate is even more important than what we put on our skin. The healthier the foods that we eat, the better our skin will look. Healthy eating is the key to a glowing, vibrant and younger-looking skin.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.secretsofhealthyeating.com/benefits-of-healthy-eating.html>

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.webmd.com/skin-beauty/features/skin-food>

Eating healthy foods gives us increased energy. A lot of people who complain of chronic fatigue are eating the wrong foods or are eating them at the wrong time. Once you start eating healthy foods, you will feel more energetic. You might even increase your metabolism.<sup>3</sup>

Healthy eating has also been inversely correlated to the incidence of specific types of diseases such as obesity, diabetes, cardiovascular diseases, cancer, osteoporosis, and dental diseases. Most of these chronic ailments have been linked to high-fat, energy-dense diets and sedentary lifestyles.<sup>4</sup>

It has also been discovered that your diet and your schedule for eating foods can affect your sleep patterns. Eating too much food late at night, especially high-fat meals, can cause digestive problems that lead to wakefulness. Consumption of caffeine or alcohol can result in difficulty in sleeping or fragmented sleep. On the other hand, there are certain foods that help promote sleep. Milk, for instance, contains the chemical tryptophan, a natural dietary sleep inducer. When taken with a little honey, the tryptophan in milk is facilitated into the brain by the carbohydrates in honey.<sup>5</sup>

Healthy eating is also very important for maintaining and promoting mental health. Depression, anxiety and mood swings have been linked to dietary changes. Healthy foods provide our body with the

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<sup>3</sup> <http://www.secretsofhealthyeating.com/benefits-of-healthy-eating.html>

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.greenfacts.org/en/diet-nutrition/1-2/1-chronic-diseases.htm#1>

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.rd.com/health/sleep-and-diet-eating-to-sleep-well/>

necessary nutrients for maintaining a balance in our thoughts, actions and emotions that are important for our peace of mind.<sup>6</sup>

## **Healthy Eating Pyramid Is Now My Plate and the Basic Food Groups**



There is no question that healthy eating is a primary component for maintaining over-all good health. However, there are some conflicting advice regarding the choice of food and how much of each type of food one should get. Two of the most influential groups that have released recommendations regarding this matter are the US Department of Agriculture and the Harvard School of Public Health.

My Plate took the place of the food pyramid in May of 2011. It was released by the USDA to encourage people to choose a variety of foods from the 5 basic food groups. It was updated to help people visually see what they need to put on their plate and also to help with portions of each food group.

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<sup>6</sup> [http://www.kellelevision.com/kellevision/2009/07/eating-for-mental-health.html](http://www.kellelevision.com/kellelevision/2009/07/eating-for-mental-health.html)

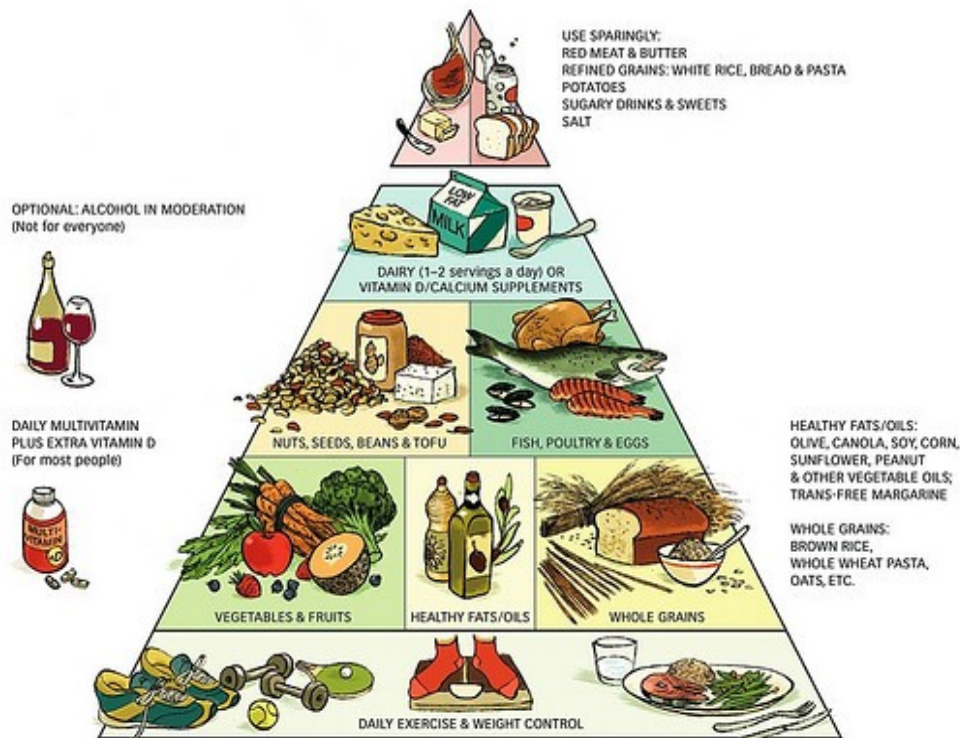
The different colors on the plate represent the 5 basic food groups. The largest color is green which represents vegetables. Vegetables are following closely by grains, then protein, fruits, and dairy.

The updated message stresses to enjoy your food, but eat less. Make half of your plate fruits and vegetables, make at least half of your grains whole grains, and switch to 1% low fat milk. Compare sodium in foods like soup, bread, and frozen means and be sure to drink water instead of sugary drinks.

The importance of daily physical activity is still stressed as well. Around 30 to 60 minutes of daily physical activity is needed to maintain a healthy weight. For the purposes of losing weight, one might need to sustain up to 90 minutes of daily physical activity. Children and teenagers are recommended to have 60 minutes of physical activity most days of the week.

# THE HEALTHY EATING PYRAMID

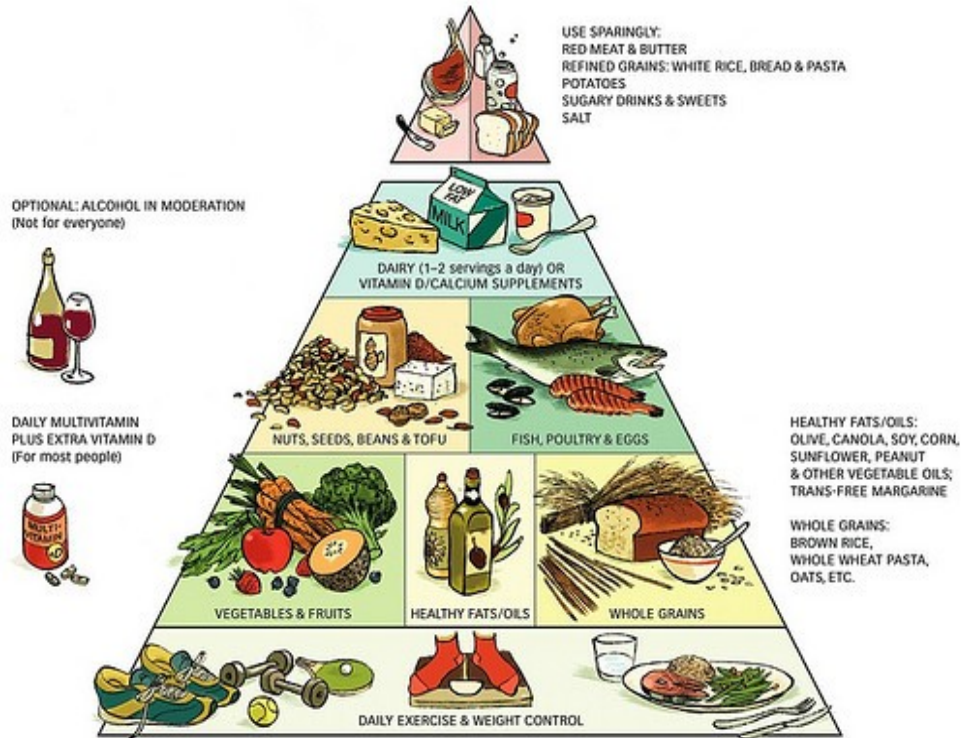
Department of Nutrition, Harvard School of Public Health



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# THE HEALTHY EATING PYRAMID

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Adapted from *Eat, Drink, and Be Healthy* by Walter C. Willett, M.D. and Patrick J. Skerrett (2005)  
Free Press/Simon & Schuster Inc.

In this healthy eating pyramid, Harvard School of Public Health asserts that recommending just 50% of the grain allowance to come from whole grains is misleading. They visually presented their recommendation of whole grain sources as a whole brick in the lower part of the pyramid, and placed refined grain products together with

sugar and salt at the very apex of the pyramid, signifying that they must be taken sparingly.

Both organizations, however, agree with their recommendations concerning vegetables and fruits. In the USDA My Plate, vegetables are represented by green, while the red stands for fruits. In a 2000 calorie diet, they suggest eating 2 ½ cups of vegetables and 2 cups of fruits.<sup>7</sup> This corresponds to the 4 ½ cup combined recommendation of HSPH for vegetables and fruits, visually presented as a single brick in their healthy eating pyramid.<sup>8</sup> Both encourage the eating of a variety of types and colors of vegetables and fruits to ensure that the body gets the different nutrients it needs from these food sources.

The yellow band in the old USDA pyramid represents oils. My Plate doesn't have a yellow color on the plate. But oils are still a necessary part of the diet as they are a primary source of essential fatty acids, such as omega-3 and omega-6 fatty acids. Foods that are rich in healthy oils include fish, nuts and vegetable oils. The recommended daily allowance for oils is just around 5-6 teaspoons. The USDA discourages excessive consumption of oils and fats primarily because they have very high calorie content. A tablespoon of trans-fat free margarine or vegetable oil, for instance, already packs around 100-120 calories.

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<sup>7</sup> <http://www.mypyramid.gov/downloads/MiniPoster.pdf>

<sup>8</sup> <http://www.hsph.harvard.edu/nutritionsource/what-should-you-eat/vegetables-and-fruits/index.html>



Recent studies, however, have debunked the belief that a low-fat, low-cholesterol diet is good for the health. Despite the increase in the number of Americans who reduced their oil and fat intake since the 1960s, both obesity and diabetes cases multiplied several folds. Research revealed that it is not so much the amount of fats and oils in the diet that are linked with disease or being overweight. Rather, it is the type of fat that we ingest that has a strong correlation to our health status.<sup>9</sup>

Bad fats, such as saturated fats in meat and dairy products, and most especially, trans fats or partially hydrogenated oils used in commercially prepared baked goods, snack foods, fast foods and processed foods, are the ones that increase a person's risk for certain diseases. However, good fats, such as monounsaturated fats and poly-unsaturated fats, are good for the heart and other parts of the body.

The HSPH recommends getting as much as 35% of our calorie needs from the good fats, that is, around 25% from monounsaturated fats such as the ones found in almonds, hazelnuts, canola and olive oil, and 10% from polyunsaturated fats such as the ones in sunflower, soybean and corn oil, flax seeds, walnuts and fish.<sup>10</sup> Mathematically

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<sup>9</sup> <http://www.hsph.harvard.edu/nutritionsource/what-should-you-eat/fats-full-story/index.html>

<sup>10</sup> *ibid.*

speaking, for a 2000-calorie diet, 35% would actually amount to 700 calories!

The blue color on the USDA My Plate represents dairy products, a rich source of calcium. They recommend drinking around 3 cups of milk or its equivalent every day for most people.

HSPH, however, discourages the consumption of more than 2 servings of dairy daily. Although mindful of the body's need for calcium, the institution advises people to choose non-dairy sources of calcium, such as green leafy vegetables, broccoli, beans and tofu, over milk products.<sup>11</sup> According to HSPH, there are no definitive studies that correlate daily consumption of more than a glass of milk to reduced risks for fractures. Furthermore, high milk and calcium intake seems to have been correlated with higher incidence of ovarian and prostate cancer. Although more studies need to be conducted concerning the matter, as of now, we cannot assume that high milk or calcium intake is safe.<sup>12</sup>

Lastly, the purple color on the USDA My Plate represents protein foods which include meat, poultry, and fish, as well as dry beans and peas, eggs, nuts and seeds. The USDA advises people to choose fish, nuts, and seeds as protein sources over meat and poultry, and that if we do eat meat and poultry, we would do better if we choose

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<sup>11</sup> <http://www.hsph.harvard.edu/nutritionsource/what-should-you-eat/calcium-and-milk/index.html>

<sup>12</sup> <http://www.hsph.harvard.edu/nutritionsource/what-should-you-eat/calcium-full-story/index.html>

lean or low-fat cuts. Around 5-6 ounces of protein is the recommended daily intake on the average.

HSPH makes similar recommendations but in a more visually understandable presentation. They included the ideal sources of protein on the third level of their healthy eating pyramid with one brick representing animal sources of protein such as fish and poultry, and another brick for plant sources of protein such as nuts, seeds and tofu. They have also placed red meats way up in the apex to indicate that these proteins should be eaten sparingly due to their high saturated fat content.

### **Healthy Eating: Summary of Recommendations**

In summary, we need to eat nutrient-dense foods that supply our bodies' nutritional needs while providing us with just the right amount of calories to sustain our energy needs.<sup>13</sup> Choose more plant-based foods such as non-starchy vegetables, fruits and whole grains. We must reduce consumption of processed meat, refined grains, potatoes, sugary drinks and salty snacks, and solid fats such as the ones found in red meat. When eating meat, it is preferable for us to choose fish or poultry.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> <http://www.mypyramid.gov/guidelines/ExecSumm.pdf>

<sup>14</sup> <http://www.hsph.harvard.edu/nutritionsource/what-should-you-eat/pyramid/>

Although not discussed in this paper, it is worth mentioning that aside from making nutritious food choices, healthy eating also encompasses the prevention of food-borne illnesses. We can reduce our risks from such illnesses by following the four basic principles of food safety which are to clean, separate, cook and chill.<sup>15</sup>

Lastly, we have to keep in mind that diet is just one part of maintaining a healthy body. Regular physical activity and exercise work hand in hand with a nutritious diet to help maintain a healthy weight and lower our risks for varied types of diseases.<sup>16</sup>

### **Healthy Eating Plans for Weight Loss**

Being overweight or obese increases our risks for chronic ailments such as type-2 diabetes, coronary heart disease and stroke, metabolic syndrome, cancer, sleep apnea, and osteoarthritis.<sup>17</sup> We do ourselves a favor by aiming for a healthier weight. As an added benefit, losing weight improves our self-image and self-confidence.<sup>18</sup>

Achieving healthy weight is simply a balancing act between the amount of energy we take in and the amount of energy we burn. Energy input and output are measured in calories. If you want to maintain your weight, you need to burn the same amount of calories

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<sup>15</sup> <http://www.mypyramid.gov/guidelines/ExecSumm.pdf>

<sup>16</sup> <http://www.hsph.harvard.edu/nutritionsource/staying-active/index.html>

<sup>17</sup> [http://www.win.niddk.nih.gov/publications/health\\_risks.htm](http://www.win.niddk.nih.gov/publications/health_risks.htm)

<sup>18</sup> <http://healthyeatingplansforweightloss.com/>

that you ingest. If you want to lose weight, you would need to burn more calories than what you eat and drink.

An effective healthy eating plan for weight loss focuses on two key elements. First, we must make smart food choices, and second, we must be mindful of the portion sizes of the food that we eat. The earlier discussion on the healthy eating pyramid (now My Plate) and basic food groups gave us the necessary information on the nutritional needs of our body and what foods to choose. We do not need to deprive ourselves of food. We do need to choose nutrient-dense foods that provide us with the necessary nutrients, but at a much lower calorie count.

With regards to serving sizes, if calculating ounces and portions is too tedious for you, you might like to follow this tip: Divide your plate into three sections. Allocate  $\frac{1}{2}$  for vegetables,  $\frac{1}{4}$  for whole grains, and  $\frac{1}{4}$  for lean protein. If you regularly follow this pattern for your lunch and dinner, you will soon be healthier and leaner.

For a more tailored weight loss plan, take advantage of the interactive tools provided in the *choosemyplate.gov* website. The food tracker tool provides instant calculations on how much calories you consume from your food and drinks, and subtracts the estimated calories you burn from your physical activities.<sup>19</sup> You might also like to try the menu planner. This tool automatically inputs the calorie

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<sup>19</sup> <http://www.mypyramidtracker.gov/>

equivalence of each food that you add to your menu. It gives you a graph of how much of the basic food groups you have covered in your daily meal plan, the total calorie equivalent of your food choices, as well as how much of your total calories came from solid fats, sugars and alcohol.

## **Eating Schedule and Metabolism**

Aside from making smart food choices and being mindful of your food portions, there is another factor that you can do something about to help you lose weight: Your eating schedule.

Our bodies' primary source of fuel is the glucose in our blood. We need a steady supply of glucose to keep our systems going. If your blood sugar level drops, you are going to experience intense food cravings and would most likely grab the most convenient food available, usually fast food.<sup>20</sup>

This is usually what happens when we skip breakfast. Studies show that skipping breakfast does not help in weight reduction.<sup>21</sup> Aside from giving us food cravings, the body responds to more than 8 hours of overnight food deprivation by slowing down our metabolism.

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<sup>20</sup> <http://www.revolutionhealth.com/healthy-living/food-nutrition/food-basics/control-eating/blood-sugar-mealtime>

<sup>21</sup> *ibid.*

It is advisable to eat breakfast within one hour of rising to jumpstart our metabolism.<sup>22</sup>

Eating smaller meals frequently, likewise, keeps us from feeling hunger pangs throughout the day. Eating 5 or 6 smaller meals a day might seem counter-intuitive to losing weight, but it does boost our metabolism. The actual process of breaking down food burns up calories, and eating several meals a day burns up more calories during the digestion process. Here's a sample ideal eating schedule:<sup>23</sup>

1. 7:00 a.m. – Eat breakfast
2. 10:00 a.m. – Eat a light snack
3. 12:00 p.m. – Eat lunch
4. 4:00 p.m. – Eat another snack
5. 7:00 p.m. – Eat a small dinner with a treat

You can eat as many times a day as you want. The important thing to remember is to eat nutritious foods and to keep yourself within your daily calorie range.<sup>24</sup>

Another tip when it comes to eating schedule is to stop eating 3 hours before bedtime. This is one way to prevent indigestion.<sup>25</sup> It

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<sup>22</sup> <http://www.flat-stomach-exercises.com/eating-habits.html>

<sup>23</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>24</sup> <http://www.revolutionhealth.com/healthy-living/food-nutrition/food-basics/control-eating/blood-sugar-mealtime>

<sup>25</sup> [http://my.clevelandclinic.org/disorders/Indigestion\\_Dyspepsia/hic\\_Indigestion.aspx](http://my.clevelandclinic.org/disorders/Indigestion_Dyspepsia/hic_Indigestion.aspx)

also allows the body to use up its energy to recuperate from the activities of the day, instead of using up energy on digestion.<sup>26</sup>

## **Healthy Holiday Eating**

The holiday season is particularly challenging for dieters. With all the holiday treats being served, it is hard to keep off extra pounds, and much more to shed them. Here are some tips you can follow to help you maintain a healthy weight.<sup>27</sup>

First, aim for weight maintenance instead of losing weight. This is a more realistic goal during the holidays.

Before going to a party, eat a light snack like raw vegetables or a piece of fruit to curb your appetite. This will help you resist the temptation to over-indulge.

In party buffets, just choose your favorite treats and skip the ones that you do not like that much. Remember to include vegetables and fruits to keep your plate balanced.

Eat until you are satisfied, not until you are stuffed. Savor your holiday treats while eating small portions. Sit down, get comfortable, and enjoy.

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<sup>26</sup> <http://www.flat-stomach-exercises.com/eating-habits.html>

<sup>27</sup> <http://www.cpmc.org/about/e-health/11-05%20healthy-holidays.html>



Be careful with beverages. Alcohol has a tendency to lessen inhibitions and may induce overeating. On the other hand, non-alcoholic beverages can be full of calories and sugar.

If you overeat at one meal, go light on the next.

Practice healthy holiday cooking:

- Gravy – Refrigerate the gravy to harden fat. Skim the fat off. This saves you 56 grams of fat per cup.
- Dressing – Use a little less bread and add more onions, garlic, celery, and vegetables. Add fruits such as cranberries or apples. Moisten or flavor with low-fat, low-sodium chicken or vegetable broth and applesauce.
- Turkey – Enjoy delicious, roasted turkey breast without the skin. This will save you 11 grams of saturated fat per 3 oz. serving.
- Desserts – Make a crustless pumpkin pie. Substitute two egg whites for each whole egg in baked recipes. Replace heavy cream with evaporated skim milk in cheesecakes and cream pies. Top cakes with fresh fruit, fruit sauce, or a sprinkle of powdered sugar instead of fattening frosting.

- Salt – You can reduce salt by half in most recipes. Go easy on salty condiments such as pickles, catsup, mustard and soy sauce. Use lower-sodium versions of mustard and soy sauce.<sup>28</sup>

Remember to plan time for exercise. A moderate increase in exercise can help offset increased holiday eating. Try 10- or 15-minute brisk walks twice a day.

## Healthy Eating Recipes

Now that you've decided to eat healthy, try your hand at some of this healthy recipes from varied Internet sources:

### **Portabella Sandwiches with Umami Sauce<sup>29</sup>**

*Recipe courtesy of The Culinary Institute of America*



Serves 4

Umami is the Japanese term for deliciousness. The umami flavor in certain foods comes from glutamic acid, an amino acid associated with savory or meaty flavors. Mushrooms contain a significant amount of glutamic acid and are considered an umami-rich food. Other umami-rich foods include tomatoes, aged cheeses like Parmeggiano Reggiano, and fermented foods like fish sauce and soy sauce. This recipe aggregates a number of umami-rich foods to create a savory, meat-free sandwich.

<sup>28</sup> <http://www.mayoclinic.com/health/healthy-holiday-eating/MY01046>

<sup>29</sup> <http://www.hsph.harvard.edu/nutritionsource/recipes/portabella-steak-sandwich/index.html>

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For umami sauce

¼ cup mayonnaise  
1 ½ teaspoons reduced sodium or “lite” soy sauce  
½ teaspoon Dijon-style mustard

For caramelized onions

1 medium white or yellow onion, sliced  
1 tablespoon extra virgin olive oil  
½ teaspoon dried thyme

For portabella mushrooms

4 large portabella mushroom caps, stems removed  
1 tablespoon extra virgin olive oil  
3 teaspoons reduced sodium or “lite” soy sauce  
3 teaspoons balsamic vinegar  
4 whole grain rolls, toasted or warmed on the grill

### **Preparation:**

Preheat your grill to medium high.

In a small bowl combine the mayonnaise, soy sauce, and mustard. Set aside

In a medium sauté pan over medium high heat, combine the onions and olive oil. Cook for 10–12 minutes, or until onions are brown and have developed caramelized flavor. Add the thyme, cook for additional 30 seconds, remove from heat, and set aside.

Brush the portabella mushroom caps with olive oil on both sides. Grill 3–4 minutes per side, or until tender.

Assemble your sandwiches by placing a mushroom cap on the bottom of each bun. Top the mushroom with about ¼ cup caramelized onions and 1 tablespoon of the umami sauce. Place the top bun on each sandwich and serve.

Nutritional information per serving:

Calories: 280/Protein: 6 g/Carbohydrate: 24 g/Fiber: 4 g/Sodium: 450 mg/  
Potassium: 450 mg  
Saturated fat: 3 g/Polyunsaturated fat: 7 g/Monounsaturated fat: 8 g/  
Trans fat: 0 g/Cholesterol: 5 mg

## Citrusy Shrimp with Asparagus<sup>30</sup>



Prep: 10 minutes; Cook: 6 minutes.

### Ingredients:

2 cups water  
1 cup dried couscous  
1/2 teaspoon sea salt, divided  
1/2 teaspoon black pepper, divided  
4 tablespoons fresh lemon juice, divided  
3/4 pound raw large shrimp (about 18), peeled and deveined  
1 tablespoon fresh lime juice  
3 1/2 teaspoons extra-virgin olive oil, divided  
2 minced garlic cloves  
Olive oil cooking spray  
3/4 pound asparagus spears, trimmed  
1 teaspoon honey  
1/4 cup chopped chives

### Preparation:

1. Bring 2 cups water to a boil in medium saucepan. Remove from heat, and stir in couscous; cover and let stand for 5 minutes. Fluff with a fork; stir in 1/4 teaspoon each salt and pepper and 1 tablespoon lemon juice.
2. Bring another pan of water to a boil.

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<sup>30</sup> <http://recipes.health.com/recipes/10000001981649-citrusy-shrimp-with-asparagus>

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3. Meanwhile, toss shrimp in 1 tablespoon each lemon and lime juice, 1 1/2 teaspoons olive oil, garlic, and remaining 1/4 teaspoon salt and pepper. Marinate for 5 minutes.
4. Preheat grill pan or grill. Lightly coat with cooking spray; grill shrimp, turning once, 3 minutes or until just cooked through. Cover and keep warm.
5. When water is boiling, add asparagus, and cook 3 minutes or until just tender. Drain, and cover.
6. Whisk together honey, chives, and remaining lemon juice and olive oil.
7. Arrange couscous and asparagus on serving plates, and top with shrimp. Drizzle with dressing.

Nutritional information per serving:

Calories: 282/Protein: 20 g/Carbohydrate: 39 g/Fiber: 3 g/Sodium: 451 mg/Calcium: 51 mg/Iron: 3 mg

Saturated fat: 1 g/Polyunsaturated fat: 1 g/Monounsaturated fat: 3 g/

Trans fat: 0 g/Cholesterol: 126 mg

### **Coconut-Crusted Tofu with Peach-Lemongrass Salsa<sup>31</sup>**



4 servings, 2 tofu steaks & 2/3 cup salsa each

Total Time: 35 minutes

#### **Ingredients:**

3 medium peaches, peeled, pitted and diced

1-2 jalapeños, preferably red, seeded and minced

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<sup>31</sup> [http://www.eatingwell.com/recipes/coconut\\_crusted\\_tofu\\_with\\_peach\\_lemongrass\\_salsa.html](http://www.eatingwell.com/recipes/coconut_crusted_tofu_with_peach_lemongrass_salsa.html)

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1 2-inch piece fresh lemongrass, minced, or 1 teaspoon dried\*  
1 tablespoon chopped fresh basil  
1 tablespoon brown sugar  
1 tablespoon rice-wine vinegar  
3/4 teaspoon salt, divided  
1/3 cup unsweetened flaked coconut  
2 tablespoons flour  
2 tablespoons cornstarch  
1 14-ounce package extra-firm water-packed tofu, drained  
2 tablespoons canola oil, divided

\*Lemongrass, essential to Thai and Vietnamese cooking, is an edible grass with bright lemon fragrance and taste. Find it fresh in the produce section of large supermarkets, at Asian food stores and chopped and dried in specialty spice sections.

### **Preparation:**

1. Preheat oven to 400°F. Set a wire rack on a large baking sheet.
2. Combine peaches, jalapenos, lemongrass, basil, brown sugar, vinegar and 1/4 teaspoon salt in a medium bowl; toss to combine.
3. Mix coconut, flour and cornstarch in a shallow dish. Cut the block of tofu lengthwise into 8 thin steaks. Pat the tofu slices dry with a paper towel, sprinkle with the remaining 1/2 teaspoon salt, then press both sides of each tofu steak into the coconut mixture.
4. Heat 1 tablespoon oil in a large nonstick skillet over medium-high heat. Add 4 tofu steaks and cook until golden brown, about 2 minutes per side, adjusting heat as necessary to prevent scorching. Transfer the tofu steaks to the rack-lined baking sheet and place in the oven to keep warm. Heat the remaining 1 tablespoon oil in the skillet over medium-high heat; cook the remaining tofu steaks until golden brown, about 2 minutes per side. Serve the tofu with the peach salsa.

Nutritional information per serving:

Calories: 251 / Protein: 11 g / Carbohydrate: 19 g / Fiber: 3 g / Sodium: 491 mg /

Potassium: 313 mg

Saturated fat: 16 g / Saturated fat: 4 g / Monounsaturated fat: 9 g / Cholesterol: 0 mg

Nutrition Bonus: Calcium (20% daily value), Magnesium (16% dv), Iron (15% dv)

**Bon appétit!**