Back to Our Roots:
Plant Party

This information is intended for healthy individuals. If you have any diseases or health conditions, please consult with your physician or registered dietitian before making any significant dietary changes.
Why plants?

Benefits of eating more plants:
1. Gut health and microbiome
2. Anti-inflammatory effects of polyphenols
3. Essential vitamins, minerals, and other nutrients

1. Gut health and microbiome

- Gut microbiome: the microorganisms that live in the digestive tract
- Most microorganisms in our gut are beneficial to our health
- Health impact:
  - Digestive health
  - Risk of chronic disease and obesity
  - Mental health
Feed your Flora with Fiber

- Gut bacteria eat (ferment) fiber.
- Whole plant foods are main sources of fiber:
  - Vegetables
  - Fruits
  - Whole grains
  - Beans and legumes
  - Nuts and seeds
- Association between high fiber diet and reduced risk of:
  - Obesity
  - Heart disease
  - Cancer

Types of Fiber

- Fermentable (feeds your gut bacteria)
  - Soluble fiber: Onions, oats, nuts, fruits, vegetables
  - Resistant starch: Unripe bananas, oats, beans, cooked and cooled starches
- Non-fermentable (increases stool bulk)
  - Insoluble fiber: Whole grains, nuts, fruits, vegetables
- Most plant foods contain a combination of soluble and insoluble fiber.
Types of Soluble Fiber

- **Inulin**
  - Garlic, onion, leek, artichoke, asparagus
- **Pectin**
  - Pears, apples, plums, oranges (and other citrus fruits)
- **Raffinose**
  - Beans, cabbage, broccoli, Brussels sprouts
- **Eating a variety of soluble fiber sources promotes diversity of gut species.**

2. Anti-inflammatory effects of polyphenols

- **Polyphenols (plant-based antioxidant compounds)**
  - Anti-inflammatory effects
  - May reduce risk of chronic diseases
  - Promote growth and diversity of healthy microbiome
- **Sources of polyphenols:**
  - Whole plant foods: vegetables, fruits, whole grains, nuts, beans, seeds, etc.
  - Herbs and spices: garlic, turmeric, ginger, cinnamon, oregano, rosemary, etc.
  - Others: tea, coffee, dark chocolate, red wine, extra virgin olive oil
Polyphenols are color pigments

- Choose a variety of colors for most nutritional benefit
  - **Red**: Beets, Red cabbage, Cherries, Cranberries, Red grapes, Red peppers, Pomegranates, Strawberries, Tomatoes, Watermelon
  - **Green**: Green beans, Broccoli, Brussels sprouts, Lettuce, Kale, Collard greens, Spinach, Green grapes, Honeydew, Kiwi
  - **Orange/Yellow**: Apricots, Squash, Cantaloupe, Mangoes, Oranges, Peaches, Pineapple, Pumpkin, Corn, Sweet potatoes
  - **Blue/Purple**: Blackberries, Blueberries, Eggplant, Figs, Plums, Purple grapes
  - **White**: Cauliflower, Garlic, Onions, Mushrooms, Potatoes

3. Essential vitamins, minerals, and nutrients

- Water-soluble vitamins
- Fat-soluble vitamins
- Other nutrients
  - Essential fatty acids
  - Proteins
  - Carbohydrates
Water-soluble vitamins

- Thiamine: beans, whole grains
- Riboflavin: almonds, asparagus
- Niacin: whole grains
- B6: bananas, peas, spinach
- Vitamin C: citrus fruits, tomatoes, potatoes, broccoli, cauliflower, Brussels sprouts, bell peppers
- Folate: dark leafy vegetables, beans

Fat-soluble vitamins

- Vitamin A: sweet potatoes, carrots, leafy vegetables, pumpkin
- Vitamin D: some mushrooms
- Vitamin E: leafy green vegetables, almonds, hazelnuts
- Vitamin K: leafy green vegetables, broccoli, Brussels sprouts, cabbage
Minerals

- Calcium: broccoli, dark leafy greens, almonds
- Iron: leafy green vegetables, beans, dark chocolate
- Magnesium: whole grains, leafy green vegetables, nuts, beans, avocado
- Potassium: broccoli, potatoes, oranges, bananas, raisins, tomatoes, leafy green vegetables
- Selenium: Brazil nuts
- Zinc: nuts, seeds, beans
- Iodine: sea vegetables

Other nutrients

- Essential fatty acids
  - Linoleic acid (omega-6): nuts and seeds
  - Alpha-linolenic acid (omega-3): flaxseeds, walnuts, chia seeds
- Protein: nuts, seeds, beans, legumes, grains
- Carbohydrate: grains, fruit, potatoes
Tips for eating more plants

Simple ways to eat more fruits and vegetables

• Fruits
  • Eat fruit for dessert instead of sweets
  • Add fresh, frozen, or dried fruit to hot cereal
  • Add frozen fruit to a smoothie

• Vegetables
  • Make vegetables the focus of lunch and dinner – fill half your plate with vegetables
  • Have a salad for lunch – add protein to make a balanced meal
  • Wash and cut vegetables in batches so that you always have some on hand
  • Add a handful of leafy greens to a smoothie
Shopping for Fruits & Vegetables

- Shop by season for best price, flavor, and nutritional value
- Compare prices on bagged versus loose produce
- Save time with pre-washed, pre-cut options
- Choose frozen options
- Choose organic when it matters most

Organic vs. Conventional
Frozen fruits and vegetables

• Low cost
• Don’t spoil
• No need to wash or cut
• Packaged at peak ripeness
• Taste and nutrition similar to fresh

Additional sources of fresh produce

• Home gardening
• Container gardening
• Farmers’ markets
• Farm stands
• Community Supported Agriculture (CSAs)
Simple ways to eat more whole grains

- Choose whole grain versions of foods you eat regularly
  - Whole wheat pasta
  - Brown rice
  - Whole grain cereals
  - Whole grain bread
- Check the first ingredient and look for the word “whole”
  - Whole wheat flour
  - Whole oats

Simple ways to eat more beans and legumes

- Add beans to a salad
- Add beans to pasta dishes
- Add whole beans or mashed beans to a wrap
- Dip vegetables in hummus
- Use quick-cooking dry beans, such as lentils
- Use canned beans to quickly add protein to any meal
Simple ways to eat more nuts and seeds

• A handful of nuts or seeds makes a healthy snack
• Combine with dried fruit to make trail mix
• Add nut butter (peanut, almond, etc.) to:
  • Whole grain bread
  • Oatmeal
  • Smoothie

Simple ways to eat more herbs and spices

• Experiment with new flavors. Use a small amount at first and taste as you go.
• Make your own spice mixes.
• Reduce your reliance on added salt by using other flavors.
• Buy in bulk and store extra in refrigerator/freezer in air-tight container
Saving time in the kitchen

- Plan:
  - Menus
  - Grocery list
- Organize your kitchen
- Keep pantry staples on hand
- Prep ingredients ahead of time
- Batch cooking
- One-dish meals
- Slow cooker meals
Prep Area

- TOWELS (for clean-up)
- STOCK BAG (for cutting board)
- PREP BOWLS
- KNIFE
- CUTTING BOARD
- TRASH CAN

Source: Nourish by Cook Smarts

Cooking Area

- SALT
- OILS
- SPOONS & SPATULAS
- SPOON REST
- STOVETOP
- COOKWARE
- TONGS

Source: Nourish by Cook Smarts