

Start the New Year right! Make an intention to create healthy eating habits that can last a lifetime!

It doesn't have to be complicated but does take some planning and dedication. Set aside an hour during a weekend/weekday afternoon or evening to plan your meals for the following week to save time and set you on track to stick to healthier eating habits. Your meals need not take hours to prepare. In fact, you can prepare a healthy vegetarian meal in a half an hour or less if you plan ahead.

For example, using a combination of fresh foods and pre-made foods that are low in fat, sodium and sugar, is a great way to save time and enjoy a nutritious meal. Take canned beans for instance. You can easily get rid of most the sodium if you rinse and drain them well. They are highly nutritious and can be added to soups, salads, casseroles, and when combined with grains or plant proteins, make a complete protein.

Use frozen fruits and veggies, it's convenient and can be just as nutritious as fresh produce which can lose nutrients if not used quickly. Toss a handful of frozen spinach in homemade soup or some frozen green peas in cooked rice. Frozen pineapple, mango, and dark cherries are all good choices when creating healthy and tasty smoothies. In addition, prep produce when you get it home to save time. Clean, chop and dry lettuce greens and store them in a sealed bag in the fridge to ensure you can have that fresh salad with your meals in just minutes. I also toss leftover veggies scraps into a sealed bag in the freezer and make a homemade veggie stock after the bag is filled. I use almost anything except peppers, cauliflower, broccoli, and cabbage. The texture of the veggies will be mushy, but that's ok because you will be straining them and only using the broth. Which turns out very tasty and is a good base for many soups, and other recipes calling for veggie broth. Freeze any remaining broth you don't use.

Quick cooking grains like whole wheat cous cous, which takes 5 minutes to prepare, and quinoa are great options to have on hand and can be used to make quick, healthy meals. Add veggies, nuts, feta cheese, or lean meat to make them into a meal. Plan ahead and make a double batch using leftovers to add to soup or incorporate into other meals later in the week.

If you eat meat, make a few extra chicken breasts the next time you bake chicken. The extra chicken can be used to make Chicken Caesar Wraps or simmered in a homemade/pre-made barbeque sauce then piled on a whole wheat hoagie roll for another quick mid-week meal.

Take time to eat together with friends or family as a great way to stay connected and healthy. It might be the only time a family can catch up during the day! There's nothing better than time spent eating good food with good friends/family.

Practicing yoga poses that are beneficial to your digestive system is definitely a complement to healthy eating. **Supta Badda Konasana** is one of the best asanas for digestion and can be done right after eating.

So, with a little planning, a little creativity, and a positive attitude about your health, you can create a healthy lifestyle that you'll want to stay with.

Please enjoy these easy recipes:

### **Peppermint Chai Tea**

1 stick cinnamon  
8 lg. Black cardamom pods  
2 tsp. Fennel seeds  
1 tsp. Whole allspice berries  
½ tsp. Black peppercorns  
1 piece (4 in.) fresh ginger, coarsely chopped  
2 cups lowfat organic milk or vanilla rice milk  
(soymilk tends to separate when boiled and doesn't work well)  
2 black tea bags (can use decaf)  
2-peppermint tea bags  
1 tbsp. or more raw sugar or honey

Wrap cinnamon stick in cloth and break into pieces with heavy object. Place cinnamon, cardamom pods fennel, allspice, and peppercorns in saucepan with ginger, milk and 3 cups water. Cover and bring to boil over medium high heat. Remove lid, reduce heat to medium and simmer for 5 minutes.

Turn off heat, add tea bags and steep for 5 minutes. Strain into teapot or thermos. Add sugar or honey, stir to dissolve and serve hot or cool to room temp and serve over ice.

You can increase the spice portion of the recipe, and place extra in a sealed container to have on hand.

### **Linguine with Winter Pesto**

2-½ c. lightly packed Italian Parsley (Flat leaf)  
¾ c. Olive Oil  
½ cup toasted pine nuts, walnuts or hazelnuts  
2 tsp. or more fresh thyme leaves  
1 tsp. or more fresh rosemary  
2 garlic cloves  
1/3 cup grated Parmesan (fresh)  
12 oz whole wheat linguine  
1/3 cup chopped toasted pine nuts, walnuts or hazelnuts

Combine 1<sup>st</sup> six ingredients in processor and blend to coarse puree. Blend in cheese using pulses. Season to taste with salt and pepper. Cook linguine in large pot of boiling salted water until just tender but still firm to bite. Drain well. Return to same pot. Add pesto sauce and toss to coat pasta evenly. Transfer to large platter. Garnish with chopped nuts and additional Parmesan if desired.

Serve with green salad and your favorite steamed veggie.