

Extension Column – March 5, 2021

Buffalo County Extension

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Personalize Your Plate

National Nutrition Month® is an annual campaign by the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics. During March, everyone is invited to learn about making informed food choices and developing healthful eating and physical activity habits. This year's theme is "**Personalize Your Plate.**" There is no one-size-fits-all approach to nutrition and health. We are all unique with different bodies, goals, backgrounds, and tastes! Here are some ways to personalize your plate.

Start the day with a healthy breakfast that includes lean protein, whole grains, fruits, and vegetables. Try making a breakfast burrito with scrambled eggs, low-fat cheese, salsa and a whole wheat tortilla or a parfait with low-fat plain yogurt, fruit, and whole grain cereal.

Make half the plate be fruits and vegetables. Fruits and veggies add color, flavor and texture plus vitamins, minerals, and dietary fiber. Make 2 cups of fruit and 2 ½ cups of vegetables a daily goal. Experiment with different types, including fresh, frozen, and canned. Try grilling or roasting vegetables to bring out their natural sweetness. Add different herbs or spices to fruits and vegetables for an extra spark of flavor.

Dairy can be added throughout the day in a variety of ways. Some ideas to try are low-fat cottage cheese with fruit, frozen yogurt pops, frozen yogurt fruit bark, add non-fat dry milk to cooked cereals or cream soups, make smoothies with low-fat milk and yogurt, sprinkle cheese crumbles into salads, use yogurt in dips, or spread low-fat ricotta cheese on whole grain bagels or toast with a drizzle of honey.

Eat seafood twice a week. Fish and shellfish contain a variety of nutrients including healthy omega-3 fats. Salmon, trout, oysters, and sardines are higher in omega-3s and lower in mercury. Grilling and baking are easy and tasty ways to prepare seafood.

Explore new foods and flavors. Add more nutrition and eating pleasure by expanding food choices. When shopping, make a point of selecting a different fruit, vegetable, or whole grain. Children are more willing to try new foods if they help select and prepare the food.

Expand menu variety with budget-friendly meatless meals. Many recipes that use meat and poultry can be made without. Vegetables, beans, and lentils are all great substitutes. Try including one meatless meal per week.

For more information about personalizing your plate contact Nebraska Extension in Buffalo County, 1400 East 34th Street, Kearney, or call (308) 236-1235.