

HEALTHY EATING

National Pear Month

Pear Party Salsa makes 4 servings

Ingredients

1 pear, cored and finely chopped, 1 apple, cored and finely chopped, 2 kiwifruit, cored and finely chopped, 1 orange, peeled and finely chopped, 2 tablespoons honey, 1 teaspoon lemon juice, and cinnamon graham crackers (optional).

Directions

Combine pear, apple, kiwi, and orange in a medium-size bowl. Pour honey and lemon juice over fruit and gently toss. Scoop up bites of fruit salsa using bites of cinnamon graham crackers (optional)



Chocolate

By: Brad Averill, M.Ed., Nebraska Extension Educator-
Food, Nutrition, and Health

Chocolate will be the topic of this week's article. That's right, your food, nutrition, and health educator is going to talk about the nutritional benefits of CHOCOLATE! Not all chocolates are created equal (nutritionally that is). Milk chocolate, white chocolate, sweet chocolate, and semi-sweet chocolates all have some nutritional benefits, but dark chocolate is loaded with nutrients that can positively affect your health.

Dark chocolate is made from the seeds of the cocoa tree. High quality dark chocolate is packed full of antioxidants and minerals. Iron, magnesium, copper, manganese and potassium are vital nutrients that make dark chocolate a healthy snacking option.

Dark chocolate can improve blood flow in the arteries and cause a small but statistically significant decrease in blood pressure. Also, observational studies show a drastic reduction in heart disease risk for the people who consume the most chocolate. Cocoa may also significantly improve cognitive function in elderly people with mental impairment. It also improves verbal fluency and several risk factors for disease.

When purchasing dark chocolate, there are a few things that you should look for to ensure you are purchasing a nutritious version of this sweet treat.

1. Make sure that the dark chocolate you buy has at least 70% or higher cocoa content. Make sure cocoa is the first ingredient listed on the nutritional information. Anything less and you are buying a product filled with added sugars and other additives. The higher the cocoa content, the higher amounts of dietary fiber.

2. Dark chocolate is often flavored with spices, extracts, and oils to improve the flavor. If you go for the flavored chocolate, make sure it is organic to avoid any artificial additives.

3. High-quality dark chocolate shouldn't have any milk added to it. Milk is often added to soften the chocolate and add flavor.

Keep in mind that even though there are vital nutrients and dietary fiber in dark chocolate, it is high in calories and is moderately high in sugar. Dark chocolate is best consumed in moderation, just like everything else that taste amazing.



Beef Roast For The Holidays

By Bethany Johnston, Nebraska Extension Educator

The winter season is a great time to gather friends, family, and (my favorite) food! What better way to celebrate than with a juicy, tender, and flavorful beef roast? Before you purchase your beef roast at the meat counter, ask yourself “How do I plan to cook this roast?” The two options for cooking a roast are 1) dry roasting and 2) braising.

DRY ROAST

For dry roasting, the roast is cooked at high heat. A rack holds the roast out of the juices in the bottom of the pan. The roast is left uncovered during cooking with the fat side up.

Place the roast in a hot oven and use a meat thermometer to tell when the roast is done. For medium rare, remove the roast when the thermometer reads 130 degrees F. Tent the meat with foil. Let the roast set for 15 minutes. The roast will continue to cook on the counter, bringing the temperature up to 145 degrees F.

Carve the roast across the grain of the meat for optimal tenderness. Make gravy or sauce using the drippings in the bottom of the pan and drizzle over the meat.

Choose beef cuts that are naturally tender, such as rib roasts or tenderloin roasts, for dry roasting. Look for choice or prime labels to increase the juiciness and flavor of the roast.

BRAISING

For fork tender, fall apart roasts like grandma made, use the braising or slow, moist heat method. Start by browning the roast on all sides in a skillet with oil. You are only cooking the outside of the roast. The browning will develop the rich, beefy flavor.

Next transfer the roast into a crockpot or large pan with a lid. Add ½ to 2 cups of liquid (broth or water). Aromatics (onions, carrots, celery) and seasonings can be added to the pan. Cover with a tight fitting lid and place on low heat. Cook for 4-10 hours (dependent the cooking temperature) until the meat is fork-tender.

The roast can be served as a pot roast, or shredded to make sandwich or taco fillings.

Choose less expensive beef cuts like chuck or round roasts for braising.

BEEF RECIPES can be found at <http://www.beefitswhatsfordinner.com/> for holiday roasts, appetizers, and more!



Peppery Beef Rib Roast.
Photo courtesy of beef.org