

Healthy eating, North Indian Cuisine



HEART &
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FOUNDATION



Dinnertime in North India brings families together at the table to eat, talk and laugh. The traditional meal is vegetarian, consisting of daal, sabzi, raita, salad, rice and chapattis. Everyday dishes are simple, lightly spiced and flavoured with fresh coriander and ginger. North Indians celebrate special occasions with deep-fried puris and kachoris, almond-studded kheer and halwa and lavish platters of barfi and jalebi.



Greater affluence and busy modern lifestyles have changed our traditional eating habits – not always for the better. Sweets are no longer just rare treats and families pressed for time rely on prepared foods and snacks high in fat, sodium and sugar.

Many South Asians are not aware that they are at a higher risk for heart disease. Healthy eating and physical activity are key to its prevention and control. By following some simple healthy lifestyle habits, we can greatly reduce the risk for heart disease and stroke.



Eat more vegetables Enjoy traditional Indian vegetables, but also experiment with local seasonal vegetables such as brussels sprouts, butternut squash, rapini, or broccoli. Cook them with spices like a traditional sabzi. Add finely diced or grated vegetables in dishes such as pulao, daal, khichri, salad, mixed into chapatti flour, stuffed into wraps, rotis or parathas.

Eat more fruit Add fresh fruit to raita, kheer and salad. Include them in dalia, pulaos, sabzis, raitas and salads. Make lassi with fresh, sweet mangos and low-fat yogurt.

Eat whole grains Replace conventional grain dishes with new whole-grain kinds. Try making dalia or bajra khichri, barley or bulghur pulao with vegetables, substitute rice with quinoa, or replace white rice for brown basmati rice. Try adding ground flax to *atta* when making chapattis or sprinkle it over dalia for breakfast.

Choose healthy fats Use only a little bit of oil to cook spices and onions. Avoid store bought pickles as they can be high in oil and salt – making your own healthy pickles is very easy. Store bought chapattis and parathas are loaded with fats; it is much healthier to make your own, served without ghee on top.

Use healthy cooking methods Steam koftas and bake mathries, kachoris, samosas and namkeen. For special occasions when you make boondi raita, soak boondi in hot water then gently squeeze out excess water. This washes away excess grease. Follow the same technique for pakodis for kadhi.

Avoid adding salt when cooking rice, daals, chana or rajma and cook them from scratch instead of buying canned. If using canned beans, rinse them before use.

Make healthy choices when eating out Avoid dishes that are termed makhani or tarka as they contain cream and butter. Ask for oil-free parathas. Avoid eating mithai such as gulab jamun, jalebi, rabri, halwa, kheer and barfi. Choose plain fruit salad instead.

Moong Daal Palak (whole mung beans cooked with fresh spinach and sautéed vegetables)

Serves 6

For variety, use asparagus, fresh fava beans or roasted root vegetables. Instead of spinach, try collard greens, swiss chard or kale. You can also serve this daal as a soup by adding low sodium chicken or vegetable broth to thin it out.

- 125 mL (½ cup) whole moong daal (whole green mung beans)
- 1 L (4 cups) water
- 2 mL (½ tsp) turmeric
- 15 mL (1 tbsp) canola oil
- 2 mL (½ tsp) cumin seeds
- ½ onion, finely chopped
- 5 mL (1 tsp) minced ginger
- 250 mL (1 cup) diced assorted vegetables, such as zucchini, carrots etc.
- 250 mL (1 cup) diced tomatoes, fresh or canned
- 2 mL (½ tsp) cayenne pepper
- 2 mL (½ tsp) garam masala
- 5 mL (1 tsp) Kasoori methi (dried fenugreek leaves)
- 500 mL (2 cups) fresh baby spinach
- 15 mL (1 tbsp) fresh lemon juice
- 25mL (2 tbsp) chopped fresh coriander



1. Rinse daal, then soak in enough water to cover for 1 hour. Drain, put in large saucepan with 4 cups (1 L) water and turmeric. Cover, bring to boil then reduce heat to low. Cook 30 min, until dal is soft and mushy.
2. Meanwhile, warm oil in non-stick skillet over medium heat. Add cumin seeds, sauté 30 seconds. Add onions and ginger. Sauté, stirring for 5 minutes until onions are softened. Add diced vegetables (except tomatoes); sauté 5 minutes. Add tomatoes and spices and cook for 2 minutes. Add daal and spinach, mix well. Cover. Bring daal to a boil over high heat. Reduce heat to low and cook 15 minutes. Mix in lemon juice and coriander.

Nutritional Information per serving (250 mL/1cup)

Calories: 103, Protein: 5g, Total Fat: 3g, Saturated Fat: 0g, Cholesterol: 0mg, Carbohydrate: 16g, Fibre: 6g, Sodium: 24mg, Potassium: 352mg

Brown basmati pulao with quinoa, red onions and mushrooms

Serves 6

Quinoa is an ancient grain that provides many of the same nutrients that are found in whole grains. Try making this recipe with just quinoa and diced vegetables.

- 250 mL (1 cup) brown basmati rice
- 125 mL (½ cup) quinoa
- 15 mL (1 tbsp) oil
- 2 mL (½ tsp) cumin seeds
- 2 whole cloves
- 2 green cardamom
- 2 cm (½ inch) stick cinnamon
- ½ medium red onion, thinly sliced
- 227 g (8 oz) sliced brown cremini mushrooms
- 550 mL (2 ¼ cups) water



1. Rinse rice then soak in enough water to cover for 1 hour.
2. Rinse quinoa. Drain rice and quinoa together in fine mesh sieve.
3. Meanwhile, warm oil in saucepan over medium high heat. Add spices; sauté 30 seconds until they sizzle. Add sliced onion, sauté 5 minutes until softened.
4. Add sliced mushrooms, sauté 5 minutes until mushrooms release liquid. Add rice and quinoa, stir gently to mix.
5. Add water, cover and bring to a boil over high heat. Reduce heat to low and cook 50 minutes. Let rice sit unopened for another 5 minutes before fluffing it up with a fork and serving.

Nutritional Information per serving (250 mL/1 cup)

Calories: 212, Protein: 6g, Total Fat: 4g, Saturated Fat: 0g, Cholesterol: 0mg, Carbohydrate: 38g, Fibre: 4g, Sodium: 10mg, Potassium: 302mg

"For my at-risk South Asian patients, my first advice is change how you cook and what you eat"

Sudi Devanesen M.D.

The Ripple Effect Wellness Organisation