March is National Nutrition Month®

National Nutrition Month®, created in 1973 is a nutrition education and information campaign sponsored by the American Dietetic Association (ADA). During the month ADA promotes healthy eating by providing practical nutrition guidance and focusing attention on the importance of making informed food choices and developing sound physical activity habits.

The theme of this year’s campaign is “Step Up to Nutrition and Health.” You can step up today by making healthier lifestyle choices to improve your health and the health of your family and you’ll reap the benefits for years to come. Small steps equal big rewards.

The key messages for National Nutrition Month® 2006 are based on the Dietary Guidelines for Americans, 2005 recommendations. Remember them to eat smart and stay physically active during the month of March and all year long:

- The food and physical activity choices made today – and everyday – affect your health and how you feel today and in the
future. Eating right and being physically active are keys to a healthy lifestyle.

- Make smart choices from every food group. Give your body the balanced nutrition it needs by eating a variety of nutrient-packed foods every day. Just be sure to stay within your daily calorie needs.
- Get the most nutrition out of your calories. Choose the most nutritionally rich foods you can from each food group each day – those packed with vitamins, minerals, fiber and other nutrients but lower in calories.
- Find your balance between food and physical activity. Regular physical activity is important for your overall health and fitness plus it helps control body weight, promotes a feeling of well-being and reduces the risk of chronic diseases.
- Play it safe with foods. Prepare, handle and store food properly to keep you and your family safe.

Trans Fat Label Reading Tips

Food manufacturers, as of January 1, 2006 are required to list trans fat on their labels. Trans fat is usually found in processed foods and fried foods that are made with partially hydrogenated shortening. They are especially bad for your heart since they have been shown to raise LDL and lower HDL. Here are important tips to make better choices with the new Nutrition Facts panel:

- Consumers should read labels on their favorite foods to make sure they are low in both trans fat and saturated fat.
- A product that contains 5% or less of the daily value for saturated fat is said to be low in that nutrient.
- With regards to trans fat, consumers should seek foods that contain 0 g trans fat as stated in the Dietary Guidelines for Americans.

Q: What is trans fat?
A: Trans fat (also known as trans fatty acids) is a type of fat formed when liquid oils are made into solid fats like shortening and hard margarine. However, a small amount of trans fat is found naturally, primarily in some animal-
based foods. Trans fat raises LDL or “bad” cholesterol that increases your risk of coronary heart disease.

**Q: Where will I find trans fat?**

**A:** Vegetable shortenings, some margarines, crackers, cookies, snack foods, and other foods made with or fried in partially hydrogenated oils.

### Consumer News Corner

### Maximize Your Tax Return

(ARA) – There are two approaches to doing taxes. One is to wait until the last minute and rush through them, crossing your fingers that you don’t owe the government an unexpectedly large chunk of money. Judging from the lines at post offices across the country at midnight on April 15, there are many, many people who take this approach.

Considering that a little advance planning can save you money and headaches, the second approach – being organized and taking control of your taxes – is a better way to go.

“It’s also important to know that when taxes go unpaid, the IRS can place a lien on your assets. Unpaid tax liens can remain on your credit report for seven years from the date paid. Both have a negative impact on your credit score,” said Maxine Sweet, vice president of public credit reporting company.

Having time to pull together the information you need, analyze it and calculate your taxes means you won’t be frantically scrambling to find your W-2 form the day before taxes are due. Starting early also gives you time to double check your tax return for any mathematical errors, and to make sure you’ve claimed all the deductions for which you qualify.

Tax laws and people’s tax situations change from year to year, so you maybe entitled to different deductions this year than last year. Major life changes often trigger a modification of deductions, or there may be deductions that you have missed in past years. Here are a few examples of common, but often overlooked, deductions. Check with your financial advisor if you have questions, or you can get more information from the IRS website or helpline.

- State and local sales tax – If you itemize your taxes, you may choose to deduct state and local sales taxes. This deduction mainly benefits taxpayers with a state or local sales tax but no income tax.

- Charitable donations – You can deduct financial contributions as well as “in kind” donations of things like clothing and household items.

- Education expenses – A variety of education-related costs may be deductible, including student loan interest and educational cost incurred to maintain or improve job skills.

- Disaster or theft – Unfortunately, lots of people may be using this deduction on their 2005 taxes. If your home was damaged by floods, ice storms, earthquakes, other natural disasters, or theft, you may be able to deduct what your insurance doesn’t cover.

- Job search expenses – If you were job hunting this year, you can deduct most expenses related to the search, including cost of resumes, phone expenses, postage, career counseling and travel to and from your interviews.
Medical expenses – The threshold for deducting medical expenses is high, but if you’ve accrued a lot of medical bills you may qualify.

Tax preparation – You can claim the cost of tax preparation software or the cost of having a professional do your taxes.

Real estate – Your mortgage interest is deductible, and if you refinanced this year, you may be eligible to deduct some of the costs associated with the loan. If you sold your main residence, you may be able to exclude up to $250,000 of gains ($500,000 for married taxpayers filing jointly from your income tax return.)

These are just a few of the legal tax deductions; there maybe others you can claim. “Be sure you have proper documentations to back up any deductions you claim,” says Sweet. And remember, while it may seem like a windfall to get a large tax refund, your goal should really be to break even. If you’re getting a refund, you’ve basically been loaning the government money – without interest.

Courtesy of ARA Content.

MAY I BE EXCUSED?

Good manners make meals more enjoyable and they’re easy for youngsters to learn.

Basic Training Parents should start by agreeing on some ground rules. Then share them with your kids – and be specific—so everyone knows what’s expected. Praise your children’s successes and remember to explain your game plan to other caregivers so there’s consistency even when you’re not around.

When your kids are old enough to imitate what you say and do, it’s time for basic training:

- Explain that everyone stays seated during the meal and that no toys are allowed at the table.
- Demonstrate proper mealtime manners by always remembering to say: “Yes, please, “No, thank you,” and “May I be excused?” (For very young children who need to leave the table, a simple “Excuse me” is acceptable.)
- Talk with your kids about words and behaviors unacceptable at the dinner table. Set guidelines for tasting new foods (such as “at least one bite”) and explain how to politely say when they’ve had enough of a dish.
- Ultimately, allow your kids to follow their instincts about food preferences. Their taste buds are vastly different than adults’. Kids may need time to appreciate delicacies such as olives, cilantro, and blue cheese.

Model Behavior Especially with young children at the table, a little preparation can make mealtimes lots more pleasant. If you forget to wash your hands before dinner, or to say please and thank you, no doubt about it—your kids will notice. Remember, too, to compliment your kids when they use good table manners. You’ll be rewarded with happy, memorable family mealtimes and—believe it or not—one day your kids might even thank you!

4-H Day at the Fair

The Fair is coming! The 4-H members are hard at work making wonderful exhibits for the Miami-Dade Fair and Expo which will open March 16-April 2. Join us on 4-H Day, March 18, beginning at noon for fun packed entertainment in talent, fashion show and public speaking.
April is Soy Month, the perfect time to salute this humble bean. Like other legumes, soybeans are high in fiber, low in sodium, and loaded with B vitamins. Soy is also packed with protein—as much as you’ll find in meat, fish, or chicken. In fact, the soybean is the only plant food that’s a source of complete protein.

Soy’s health benefits include lowering cholesterol and the risk of heart disease, making your bones stronger, and even fighting cancer. But you know how hard it is to get your family to try anything new—even when they know it’s good for them. What can you do? Read on to discover how to prepare and serve soy in ways your family never imagined.

Soy Versatile
Soy comes in multitude of forms, from liquid to solid, and everything in between. You can drink it, cook with it, pour it over cereal, sauté it, mix it with other ingredients, and simulate all kinds of familiar foods from shakes to burgers.

Soy milk is a creamy, lactose-free drink made by pressing liquid from ground soybeans. As a substitute for milk, it comes fortified with calcium, vitamin D, and vitamin B12, and in low-fat or regular versions. Drink it, use it with cereal, or substitute it for milk in most cooking—are all good ways to quietly sip soy into your family’s diet.

Summer’s Essence Strawberry Shakes
*From Healthy Cooking for Kids by Shelly Null (St. Martin’s Griffin, 1999)*

Kids will love these vitamin C-rich smoothies, either sipped through a straw or as lip-smacking frozen pops. 5 minutes prep time  Serves 4*

- 2 c soymilk or rice milk
- 4 medium ripe bananas
- 1 pint hulled strawberries
- 2 Tbsp honey

Combine the milk, bananas, strawberries, and honey in a blender. Blend on high speed for 1 minute or until smooth and creamy. Pour into glasses and serve with straws.

*This recipe should provide you with 12 frozen pops: Pour the smoothies into twelve ½-cup ice cream pop molds and place the molds in the freezer to set for about 2 hours. Remove the pop molds from the freezer and insert wooden sticks three-quarters of the way into the molds, then place them back in the freezer until the entire pop is fully set (at least 2 to 3 hours).

Recipes

**Tofu-Chiladas**
*From Vegetarian Meals for People-on-the-Go by Vimala Rodgers*

Using tofu in place of ground meat reduces saturated fat content. 30 minutes prep time. Serves 10

- 2 lb firm tofu
- ¼ c reduced-sodium soy sauce
- 1 can (6 oz) tomato paste
- 2 tsp onion powder
- 1 tsp cumin, ground
- 1 tsp garlic powder
- 2 Tbsp chili powder
- 1 Tbsp extra-virgin olive oil
- 1 can (28 oz) peeled whole Roma tomatoes
- 2 medium ripe avocados
- 3 c enchilada sauce
- ½ whole-wheat tortillas
- 2 cans (12 oz each) black olives, drained and sliced

Preheat oven to 350°. Squeeze tofu well to remove water. Combine soy sauce, tomato paste, onion powder, cumin, garlic powder, and chili powder in a bowl. Stir briskly with a fork until well mixed. Crumble the squeezed tofu into the mix, coating it well. Saute mixture briskly in oil until slightly browned. Add tomatoes, breaking them apart with your hands. Saute a few moments longer until heated through.
Cut avocados lengthwise, and slice each half into six 1/4-inch slices. Place enchilada sauce in a bowl, and dip each tortilla in it. Then place tortilla on a plate, putting ½ cup of filling down the center of the tortilla. On top of the filling, place several avocado slices and about a tablespoon of olives. Roll up the tofu-chilada and place flap-side down in a glass baking dish. Do this for each enchilada until all ingredients are used. Cover with any remaining enchilada sauce, and top generously with olive slices. Bake for 20 to 25 minutes until hot and bubbly.

**Tofu Key Lime Pie**
From Soy Desserts by Patricia Greenberg (Regan Books, 2000)

10 minutes prep time + chill time
Serves 6

Using tofu instead of cream cheese in desserts cuts calories by more than half.

1 9-inch **graham cracker pie crust** (right), or use a store-bought crust
12 oz **firm tofu**
1/3 c **powdered sugar**
2 Tbsp **Key lime juice**

Prepare the pie crust according to the following recipe. In a food processor, puree the tofu until smooth, about 3 minutes. Add the powdered sugar and Key lime juice. Continue to puree until smooth.

Pour into the prepared crust. Garnish with lime zest. Refrigerate for at least an hour or overnight.

**Graham Cracker Crust**
15 minutes prep time
Makes one 9-inch crust

1-1/4 c **graham cracker crumbs**
6 Tbsp **soft soy margarine**

Process the graham crackers in a food processor on high speed until they are finely ground. Add the margarine and pulse until the mixture reaches the consistency of coarse crumbs. Pat the mixture into a thick layer in the bottom of a 9-inch pie plate or a springform pan. Bake in a preheated 350º oven for 8 to 10 minutes. Cool completely before filling.

For more information check out: www.soyfoods.com

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**Size Up Your Servings and Eat for Good Health**

Do you ever find it difficult to know just how much you eat at a meal? Do you think one serving of pasta is the amount than fits on one plate? If so, you may be eating more servings from the Food Guide Pyramid than you think! When you can’t measure your portions, use the following tips to compare what you are eating to the Food Guide Pyramid.

**Bread, Cereal, Rice, and Pasta**

One serving= 1 slice bread; ½ cup cooked pasta, rice, or cereal; 1 (4-inch) pancake or waffle; ½ hamburger or hotdog bun, bagel, or English muffin.

- 1 cup of pasta, rice, or cereal is the size of a fist or a tennis ball.
- 2 cups of cooked pasta is the size of a full outstretched hand.
- 1 (4-inch) pancake or waffle is the size of a compact disc (CD).

**Vegetables**

One serving = ½ cup chopped raw or cooked vegetables; 1 cup of leafy raw vegetables. ¾ cup vegetable juice; 1 small baked potato
1 small baked potato is the size of a fist or a computer mouse.
1 cup of salad is the size of a baseball.
1 cup of broccoli is the size of a fist.

### Fruits

![Fruits](image)

One serving = 1 medium fruit; ½ cup grapes, berries, or canned fruit; ¼ cup dried fruit; ¾ cup fruit juice.

- 1 medium fruit is the size of a tennis ball.
- ½ cup of grapes is the size of a light bulb.
- ¼ cup of dried fruit is the size of a large egg.

### Meat, Fish, Poultry, Dry Beans, Eggs, and Nuts

![Meat & Beans](image)

One serving = 2 to 3 ounces of cooked lean meat, poultry, or fish [Count 1 egg, ½ cup cooked dried beans, 1/3 cup nuts, or 2 tablespoon (tbsp) peanut butter as 1 ounce of meat.]

- 3 oz meat, fish, or poultry is the size of a deck of cards.
- 2 tbsp peanut butter is the size of a ping pong ball.
- 1 standard slice of luncheon meat is about 1 ounce.

### Milk, Yogurt, and Cheese

![Milk](image)

One serving = 1 cup of milk or yogurt; 1 ½ to 2 ounces of cheese

- 1 ½ ounces of cheese is the size of a 9-volt battery or 6 dice.
- 1 ounce of cheese is the size of 4 dice.
- 1 standard slice of American-type cheese is about 1 ounce.

### Fat, Oils, and Sweets

Use sparingly

![Oils](image)

- 1 teaspoon of salad dressing, butter, or margarine is the size of a thumb tip.
- 2 tbsp of salad dressing is the size of a ping pong ball.

### 10 Ways to Trim Fat from Your Grocery List

1. **Only shop on a full stomach.** When you’re hungry, you’re more tempted to buy high-fat foods, say nutritionists. Go when you’re not in a rush. That way you’ll have more time to read food labels, which will help you make healthier choices.

2. **Trade ground beef for ground chicken or turkey.** Your burgers and tacos will taste just as meaty, but you’ll slash the fat in every bite.

3. **Look for the low-fat version of your favorite cheese.** The taste and texture of low-fat cheeses have vastly improved over the past few years. Plus, you save about six fat grams per serving.

4. **Ditto ice cream.** Purchase low-fat ice cream or frozen yogurt instead of the regular kind. And get a box of individual-size bars instead of a tub. The reason: You’re less likely to have more than one bar, unlike the tub where it’s easy to keep sticking your spoon back for another bite.
5. Carefully scan food labels for trans fats. A great way to eat healthy is to simply put back on the shelf any food that contains these artery-clogging, man-made fats, says nutritionists. Food companies have eliminated trans fat from many products like their variety of crackers.

6. Frozen meals are okay if you choose healthy ones. Swap regular frozen macaroni and cheese or pizza dinners for their low-fat counterparts. You can find substitutes that taste just as good. And these are a great way to keep portions in control. The prepackaged portions keep the amount of fat you’re consuming in check, but the servings are hearty so you don’t feel deprived.

7. Say yes to potato chips – the baked kind. There are so many flavors out there now and by swapping regular chips for baked, you’ll cut your fat intake by 80 percent.

8. Try fat-free Greek yogurt. “The thick texture of Greek yogurt makes it very satisfying, so you feel like you are really indulging. Add fresh fruit like frozen blueberries or strawberries to sweeten it.

9. Only buy bread with fiber. Bread should have three grams of fiber per slice. The fiber will help keep you full and you’ll consume less fat throughout the day. Look for “whole-wheat flour” listed as the first ingredient on the labels.

10. Make room for only one splurge per trip. If you know you get to pick out one treat, you’ll really think about what you want it to be, instead of mindlessly throwing in a couple bags of candy or cookies.

MyPyramid will help you build an eating plan that works for you. You will find the right amount of foods to eat to meet your calorie needs and promote a healthy weight. Your eating plan will also give you the nutrients you need for good health! Go to MyPyramid.gov. to create your personal eating plan.

After creating a eating plan, find a balance between food and physical activity by including “Sixty a Day the Florida Way,” The Florida Department of Health slogan which advises adults and children to be physically active 60 minutes a day to help prevent weight gain and promote good health. These minutes can be broken into two thirty minutes or four fifteen minutes a day, whichever suits your situation best. If you absolutely cannot adhere to this plan then be physically active at least 30 minutes most days of the week. As always, check with your primary health care provider before embarking on a physical activity program.

It is the policy of the Miami-Dade County to comply with all the requirements of the American Disabilities Act (ADA). For sign language interpreter services, call (305) 670-9099 five days in advance. For materials in accessible format call the Consumer Services Department (CSD), for ADA complaints, call CSD at (305) 375-3566.