

## HEALTHY DIET CHANGES ONE MONTH AT A TIME

Instead of making a bunch of diet changes at one time, opt for a more manageable approach by making one overall change per month. That way over the course of 12 months you have opted for a healthier.

- Month 1—Eat more high fiber foods which are also high in nutrients too. Opt for foods with more than 2-3 grams of fiber per serving.
- Month 2—Try to decrease your intake of saturated fat and include more low-fat or non-fat dairy options in your diet.
- Month 3—Try switching to eating more fruits and veggies instead of candies, cakes and fried foods.
- Month 4—Try to eat most meals of the day according to MyPlate. Remember MyPlate recommends half of our plates contain fruits and vegetables at each meal.
- Month 5—Try to limit or reduce your intake of sodium. Choose “low-salt” or “no added salt” versions of foods like chips, crackers, canned vegetables, nuts, soups and condiments.
- Month 6—Remember the basic food safety principles: cook, clean, chill and separate. Also, remember to wash your hands often with warm, soapy water for 20 seconds; especially during cooking.
- Month 7—Try to fit in 2½ hours per week of physical activity. If you haven’t exercised in a while; start slowly and gradually increase your time and intensity.
- Month 8—For healthy back to school lunches and brown bag lunches check out [www.choosemyplate.gov](http://www.choosemyplate.gov).
- Month 9—Try to eat less cholesterol and trans fat and increase your consumption of heart healthy fats. Heart healthy fats are omega 3 fatty acids, polyunsaturated and monounsaturated fats.
- Month 10—Try to do one meatless meal per week when planning meals for your family.
- Month 11—Take your favorite holiday recipes and see if you can lighten them up. Lighten them up by swapping full fat ingredients for low-fat ingredients or reduce the sodium in recipes by ¼ to ½ of the required amount.
- Month 12—Try to maintain your weight by eating healthy, exercising regularly and avoiding high calorie foods.

## SPOTLIGHT ON STRAWBERRIES

Strawberry season is right around the corner. In late February-early March at a farmers market or grocery store near you, Louisiana strawberries will be in supply. Strawberries are very nutritious and are high in antioxidants. The antioxidants in strawberries have been found to decrease the risk of heart disease, cancer and obesity; all good reasons to enjoy strawberries this season.

One-half cup of strawberries have approximately 45 calories, 84 mg of Vitamin C, 26 mg of folate and approximately 4 grams of fiber. They are fat-free too! Louisiana strawberry season runs from late February to mid-May. So make sure to include these Louisiana strawberries in you and your family’s diet.

When purchasing strawberries look for berries with a full deep red color, bright luster but firm and plump. Avoid purchasing berries that have mold spots, large uncolored areas or wilted or brown stems. Do not wash berries until you are ready to eat them or use them in dishes as washing them and putting back in the fridge can promote spoilage and mold growth. Strawberries should be used as soon as possible and refrigerate them as soon as you come home from the store. One quart of strawberries yields approximately 3¾ cups of hulled whole berries or 2¼ cups sliced. Strawberries freeze well with or without sugar.

To freeze with sugar, sprinkle sugar over washed whole or sliced berries. Use ½ to ¾ cup sugar to 4-5 cups sliced berries. Turn berries gently with a spoon until all are coated with sugar. Let berries set 5-10 minutes to make their own juice. Add one teaspoon of commercial ascorbic acid to the sugar to protect the color. Pack in moisture proof freezer bags or containers. Fill containers leaving ½ inch headspace and place a crumpled piece of wax paper on top. Seal and label. Freeze.

To freeze berries without sugar, place whole berries in a single layer on a tray or cookie sheet; cover lightly and freeze quickly until firm. Remove from pan and package airtight in moisture proof freezer containers or bags. Freeze.



## MARDI GRAS FOOD SAFETY

Mardi Gras is right around the corner and soon the carnival season will kick into high gear with parades, balls and festivities. If you and your family will celebrate the carnival season make sure food poisoning doesn’t spoil your good time.

Foodborne illness or food poisoning symptoms often mimic the flu or a 24 hour virus because the symptoms are the same. By following a few food safety tips on the parade route you too, can prevent food poisoning from occurring.

- Have plenty of baby wipes, moist towelettes and hand sanitizer to keep your hands clean.
- Keep perishable foods on ice. Use one ice chest for drinks and the other for foods. Any foods like fried chicken, potato salad, ham, beef, fish or chicken sandwiches, deviled eggs or egg sandwiches must be kept on ice.
- If you are going to grill make sure you keep foods/meat on ice prior to grilling and once cooked put them in the cooler once you are finished with them.
- If you have babies or small children with you on the parade route, be sure to have plenty of supplies (bottles, cups, drinks, food) that they will need.
- If you will visit a street vendor for food items make sure they have proper equipment to keep food hot and refrigerated. Also check the cleanliness of their booth or cart.
- Remember the food safety principles of keep hot food hot; cold food cold; wash hands often; and equipment clean.

## SENSIBLE FOOD BUYS FOR JANUARY-MARCH

Dry beans and peas	Broccoli	Greens (collards, spinach, mustard, turnip)	Pears
Cabbage	Cauliflower	Shallots	Fish and Seafood
Carrots	Onions	Irish Potatoes	Grapes
Sweet potatoes	Oranges and grapefruits	Lettuce	Canned Foods
Beets	Strawberries	Apples	(vegetables, fruits and soups)
Radishes	English peas		

## CITRUS FRUITS AND VITAMIN C

Citrus fruits are plentiful here in Louisiana and at this time of year. Navel oranges, kumquats and satsumas are being harvested from trees now; along with Louisiana grapefruits.

Oranges, grapefruits, satsumas and tangerines are loaded with Vitamin C. Vitamin C is a powerful vitamin that helps keep our immune systems healthy, help decrease the risk of developing diseases and helps with teeth and bone development.

When selecting Louisiana citrus fruits, look for heavy fruits with smooth skins and free of soft spots. Don't let the color orange be your only guide, because even oranges with light green skins can hide ripe fruit.

The oranges will keep several days at room temperature or a few weeks in the crisper drawer of your refrigerator. Try the following recipe for orange muffins if you have an abundance of Louisiana oranges.

### Orange Muffins

2 cups flour	1 teaspoon baking soda
½ cup margarine	1 cup sugar
1 cup raisins, ground	1¼ cups orange rind, ground
½ cups pecans, ground	2 eggs
1 teaspoon vanilla	1½ cups buttermilk
½ cup sugar	Juice from oranges

Heat oven to 400°F, grease small muffin tins. In a small bowl, stir together flour and soda and set aside. In a large mixing bowl, cream margarine and sugar, add ground raisins, orange rind and pecans and mix thoroughly. Add eggs and vanilla and mix well. Stir in remaining ingredients. Fill small muffin tins ⅔ full. Bake for 15-18 minutes or until brown. While muffins are baking, mix together the juice from the oranges with ½ cup sugar. Heat in a small saucepan until a thin syrup is formed. Drizzle over muffins while still warm. Makes 48 mini muffins.

## STARTING A WALKING PROGRAM

Walking is great exercise and it's one of the cheapest and easiest exercises to do. When starting a walking program it will take you approximately 12 weeks to work up to a goal of 30 minutes per day. Before beginning any exercise and ending exercise you want to have a warm up and cool down period. Both the warm up and cool down should last five minutes each to properly warm the body and muscles and cool the cardiovascular system down. Below is a sample 12 week walking program to help you start off.

Week 1—5 minute warm up, 5 minute walking, 5 minute cool down

Week 2—5 minute warm up, 7 minute walking, 5 minute cool down

Week 3—5 minute warm up, 9 minute walking, 5 minute cool down

Week 4—5 minute warm up, 11 minute walking, 5 minute cool down

Week 5—5 minute warm up, 13 minute walking, 5 minute cool down

Week 6—5 minute warm up, 15 minute walking, 5 minute cool down

Week 7—5 minute warm up, 18 minute walking, 5 minute cool down

Week 8—5 minute warm up, 20 minute walking, 5 minute cool down

Week 9—5 minute warm up, 23 minute walking, 5 minute cool down

Week 10—5 minute warm up, 26 minute walking, 5 minute cool down

Week 11—5 minute warm up, 28 minute walking, 5 minute cool down

Week 12—5 minute warm up, 30 minute walking, 5 minute cool down

Once you reach 30 minutes, you can stay at this rate or increase your time by two minutes each week until you reach 45 or 60 minutes per day of walking. Before starting any exercise program it is recommended that you check with your physician to ensure you do not have any health problems.

## MARCH IS NATIONAL NUTRITION MONTH!

Every March we celebrate National Nutrition Month. The theme for the 2015 National Nutrition Month is "Bite Into a Healthy Lifestyle," but we should eat healthy all year long not just in March.

Ways that you can "Bite Into a Healthy Lifestyle" are:

- Know what your body needs. How many calories we need to eat daily depends on age, gender, body type and if you have any chronic diseases.
- Eat nutrient dense foods most of the time and non-nutritious foods sparingly.
- Learn how to read the nutrition facts label; as this can tell you a wealth of information about a product and if it's a healthy choice or not.

So eat right every day during March and year-round!

## UPCOMING EVENTS:

- Health Fair—The Vermilion Parish Health Fair will be held on Wednesday, April 22 from 9:00 a.m.—12:00 p.m. at the Abbeville Library. There will be health screenings; health and wellness information and much more. The Abbeville Library is located at 405 E. St. Victor Street in Abbeville.

*For more information on any topic in this newsletter or any other topic please contact our office at :*

**337-898-4335**

### Cooperative Extension Service

Vermilion Parish

1105 W. Port Street

Abbeville, LA 70510

Phone (337) 898-4335, Fax (337)893-7165

Website: [www.lsuagcenter.com](http://www.lsuagcenter.com)

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### Next Issue Features:

Reducing Sodium in the Diet, Healthy Summer Snacks and Much More!!!

Kindest Regards,

*Mandy G. Armentor, MS, RD, LDN*  
*Area Nutrition Agent*  
*Vermilion Parish Extension Service*