



# Nutrition News

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## Brought to you by

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## Tip of the Month:

*A study published in the New England Journal of Medicine found that Americans gain an average of 0.4 to 1.8 pounds each year during the holidays. Unfortunately, that weight isn't likely to disperse with the holiday cheer – it tends to stick around. Here's a quick tip to help prevent that little addition this holiday season.*

*When you host a holiday party, the table doesn't have to be groaning under the weight of calorie-dense treats like cookies and cakes. Instead, make fruits and vegetables the star of the show. Try...*

- *Fruit-based desserts like chocolate-dipped strawberries or cinnamon apples.*
- *A trio of low-fat dips surrounded by fresh sliced veggies.*



# Heirloom Tomato and Fig Soup

A cozy fall dish that's perfect for any occasion!

## Ingredients

5 assorted heirloom tomatoes (yellow, red, plum, cherry, ugly, etc), sliced

1 green bell pepper, seeded, cored, and sliced

3 figs, sliced

1 cup fresh basil leaves

1 sliced onion

3 cups low-sodium broth

Dash garlic salt, black pepper to taste, and Italian herb mix

1-1/2 cups half and half

1 tablespoon grated Parmesan cheese

## Directions

Place the vegetables, fruit, broth, and seasonings in a large Dutch oven. Bring everything to a boil, lower to a simmer, and cook on medium until peppers are tender. Puree. Return the puree to the stove and cook until slightly thick. Add the cream, stir, and turn off the heat. Garnish with fresh grated Parmesan cheese and serve.

## Nutrition Information

Serves 4.

Each serving is 1.5 cups and contains 170 calories, 3g fat, 1g saturated fat, 0g trans fat, 6mg cholesterol, 197mg sodium, 29g carbohydrate, 4g fiber, 16g sugars, 9g protein.

Red tomatoes are an excellent source of lycopene, a carotenoid that has been linked to improved heart health.





## Boost Flavor with Veggies!

*By Judy Doherty*

Cynthia Lopez-Pettorino, a registered dietitian, certified diabetes educator, and nutrition coordinator, asked us to delve deeper into the world of aromatic veggies, citing their budget friendliness and huge flavor-boosting properties.

So, what is the definition of **aromatic vegetables**?

Generally, **aromatic vegetables** are used as a flavor base when cooking. Many cuisines in Europe and the Mediterranean use a base of garlic, carrots, onions, celery, and peppers as aromatics. But you don't have to stop there! You can also scan the produce aisles for appetizing in-season vegetables to get a flash of

great flavor while cooking and preparing salads.

### Consider These Options:

- **Mushrooms** often contribute a meaty flavor and texture called umami to dishes.
- **Hot peppers** come in all varieties of heat and spice and often you can use one to pep up dishes for the whole week! Think salads to salsas to grilled items.
- **Garlic** has a great shelf life and adds a classic taste that is utterly unique to itself.



## Spotlight on Onions

**These versatile alliums are flavor powerhouses that can take your cooking to the next level!**

*Choose from sweet, red, yellow, or white onions, then mix and match in whatever dish you're trying. Experiment with shallots for a milder flavor.*

*Scallions are a fresh way to add a gentle hint of onion too. Plus, these are easy to chop with no peeling and no crying.*



# The MIND Diet

By Lynn Grieger, RDN, CDE, CPT, CHWC

## What You Eat Affects Your Brain

Alzheimer's disease is an irreversible, progressive brain disease that affects an estimated 5.4 million Americans. Its cause is not completely understood, and most likely is due to a combination of factors, including food choices.



## Meet the MIND Diet

Martha Clare Morris, a nutritional epidemiologist, conducted a research study using a unique combination of the DASH and Mediterranean diet plans. Morris found that the MIND diet lowered risk of Alzheimer's by about 35% for people who followed it moderately well, and up to 53% for people who closely followed it.

## Features of the MIND Diet

This pattern focuses on 10 food groups to promote health: leafy greens, other vegetables, nuts, berries, legumes, fish, poultry, olive oil, & wine (in moderation and if desired). The MIND diet also reduces or avoids foods from these five groups: red meat, butter/stick margarine, cheese, pastries/sweets, & fried/fast food.



## The Science Behind It

Nutrition plays a key role in brain health because the brain requires energy and a variety of nutrients. Elements in vegetables, seafood, and berries play important roles in brain health. More limited data are available on the benefits of monounsaturated fat, carotenoids, polyphenols, and vitamin D.

# Research Update: Vegetarian Eating Patterns and Heart Disease

Heart disease remains the number one killer in the US, with over 600,000 people dying of heart disease every year (based on recent CDC statistics). While age, sex, and hereditary are not in our control, plant-based diets have consistently been shown to prevent or treat symptoms of chronic diseases including diabetes, obesity, heart disease, and cancer.

A diet that contains whole grains, legumes, flaxseed, fruits, and vegetables may help reverse atherosclerosis and ischemic heart disease. Researchers in Boston went a bit further to see **which foods in a plant-based diet may be helpful instead of harmful**, since all diets are not created equal. Their findings were published in the *Journal of the American College of Cardiology*. Subjects were recruited from three different health studies including the Nurse's Health Study, Nurse's Health Study II, and Health Professional's Follow-Up Study and were tracked for over 20 years using questionnaires that evaluated lifestyle, medical history, and health behaviors. Out of the baseline healthy participants, 8,631 subjects developed heart disease.

An initial consideration from the investigators was that **previous research did not differentiate between types of plant-based diets that were all deemed vegetarian**. The researchers did a more detailed approach and came up with three categories of plant-based diet patterns:

- Diets that maximized plant food intake but did not entirely exclude animal-derived nutrients.
- Solely plant-based diets that maximized intake of healthful plant foods (such as fruits, vegetables, and whole grains).
- Plant-based diets consisting mostly of unhealthful plant-derived food (including sweetened beverages, potatoes, sweets, and refined grains).

Participants that followed a healthful, animal-free diet that consisted mostly of fruits, vegetables, and whole grains had a much lower risk of developing heart disease. Consumption of not-so-wholesome refined grains had a negative influence on the heart. **Overall, healthful plant-based foods were associated with lower risk of heart disease while unhealthful plant-based and animal-derived products were linked with a higher risk of disease.**

Clinicians should obtain more detailed diet histories when patients say they follow a "vegetarian" diet. After all, "vegetarian" may mean mostly plant-based foods, plant-based with eggs and dairy, or simply no animal products, but refined grains and sugars included. *By Lisa Andrews MEd, RD, LD*

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