

# Women's Nutrition Matters Monthly

December 2008

## Eating for the Winter Season

*Making the switch to a more cooked diet*

With a dusting of snow on the ground last night, we have to admit that winter is here. Gone are the warm days and cool evenings of autumn. And just as the seasons change, our diets, too, must change to meet the needs of a much different climate. The cold, dark days of winter--and I love them-- call out "hibernation food" to me: the casseroles, the warm cooked grains and beans that hold no interest for me in the summer months. The salads and sprouts and fresh fruits that I thrived on all summer long do not satisfy me at all now. I'm hungry!! Working outside on the farm or hiking with Bolo in this weather makes me crave warm soups and stews and heavier foods. How about you?

### Adding More Cooked Foods

I eat a lot of raw salads in the warm seasons, and they quench my thirst and keep me light and cool. But that's not what I need in December! For those of you who eat a lot of raw foods and salads: do you still feel satisfied

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## The Importance of Vitamin D Supplementation

*Avoiding deficiency of this important nutrient*

I know I've talked about the importance of vitamin D in the past: in fact, I've written whole articles about it. The fact is, we as a nation are very deficient in this nutrient. Vitamin D is synthesized from sunlight on our skin through a complex process involving our liver and our kidneys. During the summer months, we require around 15-20 minutes of sun exposure to our arms and legs several times a week for the average Caucasian, more if you are darker skinned. This is without sunscreen: sunscreen of as little as SPF8 reduces the synthesis of vitamin D by 95 percent. Herein lies the problem. We have become so "sun phobic" that we never go out of the house without slathering on sunblock, so we never can make vitamin D! What's more, during the winter months the sun's angle is too great (and we never have exposed skin anyway in the winter!) to provide us with adequate exposure. So what do we do?

### Why Drinking Milk Doesn't Cut It

Now many of you are saying to yourself, "well, I drink fortified milk! It has vitamin D added to it!" Yes, it does. But the miniscule amount of D2 added to milk won't make a dent in your deficiency—this form of vitamin D is cheaper than D3, and is poorly utilized by our bodies. By the way, the RDA of 400 units is far below the needs of the body- this level was chosen to prevent rickets only! The Harvard Medical School is recommending that everyone over the age of 2 years old be supplementing with 2000 units of vitamin D daily. Don't be surprised to see the RDA for this vitamin changing in the near future, as well. Much research has been done on the body's need for

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this time of year? For those of you who do not, here is my suggestion: think cooked. Rather than eliminate raw foods entirely, I suggest adding more cooked foods and then see how your body feels. It's still paramount that you get tons of veggies and fruits in your diet—that will never change! But experiment with light steaming and sautéing them now. For example, instead of my usual huge lunch salad, I skip the baby greens and go for heartier winter greens—remember, seasonal eating? Try escarole, kale, chard, spinach. Lightly steam them, and use this as your salad base. Then add steamed broccoli, carrots, beans, whatever. Or cook up extra veggies for dinner and serve the leftovers over your greens. Light steaming and sautéing retains most of the nutritional value while aiding in digestibility. Add a small handful of pumpkin seeds or nuts and a bit of dressing for the much needed fat that winter requires and you have a satisfying winter lunch!

### **Great Grains**

Now is the time to bump up the grains! Grains are high in fiber, B vitamins, vitamin E and magnesium. The whole grains contain the bran and the germ of the grain, just as nature intended. Grains are nature's comfort foods. Think of a warm bowl of oatmeal with raisins on a cold morning—see what I mean? But go beyond oatmeal for breakfast and experiment with kasha, or raw buckwheat, or Kashi 7-grain pilaf. This is wonderful for dinner or breakfast! Add a bit of cinnamon or sweetener and a splash of almond milk and you have a wonderful way to start the day. No time to cook in the morning? Put your grains in a microwavable bowl at bedtime and cover with hot water. Cover and leave it overnight. Then microwave it the rest of the way in the morning—you may have to add more water. This is easy!

For dinners, go beyond plain brown rice. There are wild rices, red, black and purple varieties as well as other grains such as quinoa, couscous, cracked wheat and barley. Visit your local library and grab a grains cookbook and go for it! Grains satisfy like no other food on a cold night. Cook up a pot and use them all week. Add them to soups, make pilafs, or use them as a platform for roasted or sautéed veggies. The sky's the limit!

Vitamin D, much of it by Dr. Michael Holick, MD. You can Google his name and find wonderful, easy to read articles about the many uses of vitamin D. For example, a deficiency of this vitamin is now linked to many diseases such as cancer, multiple sclerosis, osteoporosis and autoimmune diseases in general.

### **Getting Enough D**

For starters, consider eating more canned fishes, such as sardines and salmon. These canned varieties include the bones which are full of calcium and vitamin D. But to really augment your supply of this vitamin, you need to take oral supplements or use a special tanning lamp. Oral supplementation of vitamin D can be done very inexpensively and a good starting dose would be between 2000 and 5000 units daily. When you have your yearly blood work done, ask your doctor to run a 25 (OH) vitamin D level, also known as a 25-hydroxy-vitamin D level. This is the most accurate test available. Your number should be at least 45 (and under around 150). If you want more information, please contact me at [herbalgem@gmail.com](mailto:herbalgem@gmail.com). You can also purchase a special D light which is similar to a tanning light, and obtain your daily vitamin D by using the light for 5 minutes a day. These lights can be purchased at [www.summertan.com](http://www.summertan.com). Whichever method you choose, make a conscious effort to get your daily dose of this sunshine vitamin and prevent a whole host of disease processes!

## **Focus Food: Cranberries!**

When we think of healthy fruits, high awards go to the berry family. We think of blueberries, strawberries, raspberries and blackberries, all glorious fruits of summer time. But long after these berries are relegated to the freezer, cranberries make their appearance in the autumn/winter market. Cranberries even grow in New Jersey where I live!

The cranberry is a relative of the huckleberry and blueberry and it shares many of their health benefits. You can tell by their dark reddish blue color that they are high in flavonoids, compounds that give them superb antioxidant properties. These properties include scavenging free radicals in the body which are responsible, (continues on page 3)

## NEWS AND COMING EVENTS

### BACK TO SCHOOL FOR DIANE!

YES, I'M BACK IN SCHOOL FOR ANOTHER YEAR OF HERBALIST TRAINING WITH DAVID WINSTON, AHG. I AM HONING MY DIAGNOSTIC AND CLINICAL SKILLS WHILE LEARNING A BUNCH MORE ABOUT MEDICINAL PLANTS.

### NEW HEALTH CENTER OPENING IN BETHLEHEM PA!

A NEW HEALTH CENTER CALLED HEALING WAYS IS OPENING SOON WHICH WILL FEATURE WONDERFUL PROGRAMS SUCH AS MASSAGE, YOGA, GRIEF COUNSELING AND , YOU GUESSED IT, NUTRITIONAL COUNSELING! I WILL BE HOLDING WORKSHOPS HERE AND ALSO DOING ONE-ON-ONE AND GROUP COUNSELING. EMAIL ME FOR MORE INFORMATION IF YOU ARE IN THE BETHLEHEM, PA AREA! [HERBALGEM@GMAIL.COM](mailto:HERBALGEM@GMAIL.COM)

### NEED A SPEAKER FOR AN EVENT?

LET ME TALK TO YOUR GROUP ABOUT HEALTHY LIVING, EATING, COOKING OR GOING GREEN! HAVE A SPECIAL HEALTH-RELATED TOPIC FOR ME TO TALK ABOUT? CALL ME! 908-377-0773

### HEALTH COUNSELING SESSIONS!

READY TO BEGIN A HEALTHIER LIFESTYLE BEFORE THE NEW YEAR'S RESOLUTIONS ARRIVE? ANXIOUS TO LOSE WEIGHT? TIRED OF BEING TIRED? CONTACT ME FOR INFORMATION ON HOW I CAN HELP YOU HELP YOURSELF TO A HEALTHIER, MORE ENERGETIC LIFE. INDIVIDUAL SESSIONS AVAILABLE, AS WELL AS 6 MONTH PROGRAMS. ASK ME FOR REFERRALS! [HERBALGEM@GMAIL.COM](mailto:HERBALGEM@GMAIL.COM)

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*When you are craving something sweet, stop and think about what sweetness you are really searching for... sweetness in the form of a hug, or some much-needed self-care, or an uplifting story, or a compliment...*

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among other things, for the aging process, cancers, and other diseases. Cranberries and blueberries are equally wonderful in preventing urinary tract infections and reducing their impact when caught early on. Both berries contain compounds that prevent bacteria from adhering to the bladder walls, which keeps them flowing out of the body via the urine.

Although these berries are too tart to be eaten out of hand, they mix well with other fruits. Add them to apple pies for a nice tart taste. Quick breads come alive with fresh or dried cranberries added to the mix. Dried berries also taste terrific stirred into hot oatmeal and other grains. Consider making a quick cranberry relish to serve alongside roast pork or chicken and then served as a condiment on sandwiches the next day:

### Cranberry Relish

Combine 1 bag of fresh cranberries in a sauce pan with about  $\frac{3}{4}$  cup of sugar and a diced orange—peel and all!—add enough water to the pot to keep them from sticking—about 1 cup-- and heat over medium flame, stirring constantly. The berries will bubble and pop open in 10 minutes or so. Keep stirring until they are done, then cool to room temperature or refrigerate. This is great on leftover turkey or chicken in a sandwich. Enjoy!



