

April 2008 Newsletter: Nutrition Matters

Tip of the month: **ehope** is a non-profit organization that forms caregiver support networks to provide the non-medical, physical, social and emotional support for patients at no cost. Check it out if you know someone who needs this sort of help **or** if you can donate time for someone in your vicinity: <http://ehope.nu/defaultM.aspx>

Food Focus: Oils and Fats

Can it get any more confusing? Saturated, unsaturated, poly-unsaturated, mon-unsaturated, hydrogenated, partially hydrogenated, or trans fats – which oils are which? Which are “high heat”? Which need fridge storage, which not?

Briefly, our ancestors ate the fats available where they were: blubber in the Arctic, olive oil around the Mediterranean, butter in northern Europe, coconut oil in southern India, and so on. For us, who can whistle up almost any food the globe offers, the choices may be too abundant. Even medical researchers disagree to a considerable extent. Consensus, however, has arrived in the black-balling of trans fats, i.e., hydrogenated oil. If you see the word “hydrogenated” on the label, don’t buy it.

Saturated fat, which is hard at room temperature, can be used for cooking, as it only goes rancid at extreme temperatures: butter, lard, coconut oil, etc. A minority of authorities claim that these fats are not necessarily harmful. Coconut oil, for instance, contains -- as does breast milk -- lauric acid, a strong support for the immune system.



Olive oil, a mono-unsaturate that’s liquid at room temperature, is a good choice for salad dressing. Flax oil, much in the nutrition news these days for providing the precious omega-3 fatty acids generally deficient in our modern diet, can be used for salads, too, but is more fragile and must be kept refrigerated. Sesame is another tasty salad oil.

How much do you need? Your body requires dietary fat for more than quick energy. Fat is used by all your organs and, indeed, by all cells. If you are not an Inuit on a traditional Arctic diet, you probably only want

25-30% of calories from fat. If you are worried about weight gain, remember that sugar and refined carbohydrates are more likely to fatten you up, calorie for calorie.

When selecting oils, buy the highest quality organic products you can afford. Good words to look for on the label are organic, first-pressed, cold-pressed, extra-virgin and unrefined. Words to avoid are expeller-pressed, refined and solvent extracted.

Two recipes this month!

1) Savory Tahini Sauce

Prep time: 5 minutes

Yield: 1 cup

Ingredients:

1/2 cup tahini (sesame paste)

1/4 cup water

3 tablespoons lemon juice

2 tablespoons tamari sauce (soy sauce, available without wheat)

2 tablespoons maple syrup (optional)

1-2 cloves of garlic, minced

1 pinch of cayenne (to your taste)

Directions:

1. In a bowl briskly whisk together the tahini and water until combined. It will look separated at first: just keep whisking!
2. Add the remaining ingredients and whisk until combined.
3. Adjust flavors to your taste. Add additional water if you want it thinner.
4. Serve over grains and greens.

Note: Tahini sauce keeps refrigerated for up to one week.

2) Avocado Dip

Prep Time: 5 minutes

Yield: 1 cup

Ingredients:

1 large peeled and pitted avocado

2/3 cup of plain yogurt

1 diced tomato

A dash or two of cayenne pepper

Sea salt and black pepper to taste

Directions:

1. Mash avocado with a fork until very smooth.
2. Add the yogurt, tomato, and cayenne. Blend until smooth. This may be done in a food processor, in a blender, or with a fork.
3. Finish with the salt and pepper.

Forward to a friend?

Since it's a pleasure to help friends become healthier, please forward this newsletter to any who might be interested in it.

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