

Enjoy the Taste of Healthy Eating: Tips for Hispanic Americans

As a Hispanic person living in the United States, you likely keep the traditions and family values of your homeland, whether your roots are from Cuba, Mexico, Puerto Rico, South or Central America or other Spanish-speaking countries. Traditional eating patterns from most Hispanic cultures include a variety of flavorful foods, many of which are rich in complex carbohydrates and protein. Some favorite dishes may also be high in fat. The longer Hispanic people live in the US, the more likely they are to adopt American eating habits. Some are healthful, such as eating more salads and drinking lower-fat milk. Others, such as eating more fatty and sugary foods, should be limited.



Chicken and Vegetable Stew

Obesity and type 2 diabetes are two important health concerns for both Hispanics and Americans, in general. More than 60% of Hispanic American adults are overweight (including more than 25% who are obese), while more than 8% live with diabetes. The good news is that you can lower your risk for developing these health conditions, or manage existing conditions, by eating healthfully and being physically active. Here are some tips to help you get started.

Fit in Traditional Favorites

Your food traditions and treasured family recipes may reflect the country or region of your ancestors. Some foods are common across Hispanic cultures, although they may be prepared or served in different ways. Foods such as corn or wheat tortillas, fruits, vegetables, rice and beans are important and can be part of a healthy diet. The secret is to make small changes in recipe ingredients and in how you prepare foods. For example, try substituting foods that are lower in fat (especially saturated fat) and calories than some typical ingredients. Such changes can help you meet your healthy eating goals without sacrificing the tastes you love. Remember, food preparation methods can be as important to a healthy eating plan as food choices. Here are some of the many ways to make foods and meals better for you and your family.

- ❖ **Choose liquid oils instead of solid fats like lard and butter.** In many recipes, tortillas can be brushed with a little oil and baked until crisp, rather than fried.

- ❖ **Bake, grill, broil or roast meats, fish and vegetables instead of frying.** For example, use grilled vegetables and chicken to make flavorful and nutritious fajitas.
- ❖ **Use spices and fresh herbs to season foods instead of salt.** Look for lower-sodium broth and canned tomatoes for soups, stews, salsas and other recipes.
- ❖ **Serve water or reduced-fat milk with meals, rather than soft drinks.** Look for 100% fruit juices when selecting juice.
- ❖ **Visit <http://www.comidakraft.com>.** Click on the "Vida Sana" section for a selection of Healthy Living recipes you and your family will enjoy.

Balance Food and Activity

Being overweight increases your chances of developing type 2 diabetes, heart disease, stroke and some types of cancer. Balancing the food you eat with recommended amounts of physical activity can help you stay at a healthy weight. For more information on finding your healthy weight, go to: <http://www.kraftfoods.com/main.aspx?s=health&m=plans/tools/weight/control>.

- ❖ **Watch portion sizes and limit second helpings.** Eat higher-calorie foods (such as fried foods, chips, candy and rich desserts) in small amounts and less often. (Tip: The Nutrition Facts panel on food products provides helpful information.)
- ❖ **Choose vegetables and fruit for snacks.** Fruit makes a great dessert, too. You'll get vitamins, minerals and fiber without too many calories. Choose your favorites or try something new. Melon wedges, bananas, oranges, grapes, mango or papaya chunks, carrot or green pepper strips, chayote and broccoli are just a few of the delicious options.
- ❖ **Be active.** Adults should be physically active for *at least* 30 minutes on most days of the week. Sixty minutes a day is the minimum goal for children and can also provide additional health benefits to adults. Activities can be done in 10-15 minute periods over the course of the day, too. Try walking to the store or post office, playing soccer or softball with the kids or dancing to your favorite music.

Trim Saturated Fat

To help keep your heart healthy, cut down on saturated fat and cholesterol.

- ◆ **Choose lean cuts of beef and pork** (look for “loin” or “round” in the name). Trim as much visible fat as possible from meat. Remove the skin from chicken and other poultry before eating. If you use meat or poultry in soups, skim the fat before serving.
- ◆ **Use protein-rich plant foods such as kidney beans, black beans, pinto beans, lentils and chickpeas often.** Mash them with chicken broth or some of the cooking water and re-fry with a small amount of vegetable oil or no-stick spray rather than lard.

- ◆ **Use reduced fat cheeses whenever possible.** Experiment with different varieties to find the ones that produce the best results in your recipes.
- ◆ **Steam, grill, roast, bake, boil or sauté foods in a small amount of oil instead of frying.**
- ◆ **Go easy on egg yolks, which are high in cholesterol.** Limit egg yolks to three to five per week. Use egg substitutes or egg whites in many breakfast dishes and for baking.

You can watch your and your family’s waistlines *and* work toward your health goals without giving up traditional favorite foods. Just experiment with making a few changes in the ingredients you use and how you prepare foods. Manage portion sizes, too. Also, remember to make time for physical activity.

Here are two delicious dishes you may want to prepare for your family.

Chicken and Vegetable Stew

Prep: 10 minutes **Cook:** 30 minutes

- 1 lb. boneless skinless chicken thighs, cut into 1-1/2 inch pieces
- 2 Tbsp. flour
- 1 medium onion, finely chopped (about 1 cup)
- 1 large carrot, finely chopped (about 1 cup)
- 1 Tbsp. vegetable oil
- 2 cans (14.5 oz. each) no-salt-added stewed tomatoes, undrained
- 2 medium zucchini, chopped
- 1 can (14 oz.) artichoke hearts, drained, quartered
- 1/2 cup sliced pitted ripe olives
- PREMIUM Saltine Crackers

COAT chicken with flour; set aside. Heat oil in Dutch oven or large saucepan on medium-high heat. Add chicken, onion and carrots; cook and stir 10 min. or until chicken is evenly browned and vegetables are tender.

ADD tomatoes with their liquid, the zucchini and artichokes; mix well. Bring to boil. Reduce heat to medium-low; cover. Simmer 20 min. Stir in olives.

SERVE with crackers.

Makes 8 servings, 1 cup stew and 5 crackers each

Nutrition Bonus: This hearty stew provides 2 servings of vegetables per person. The carrots provide vitamin A, and the tomatoes are a good source of vitamin C.

Nutrition Information Per Serving: 250 calories, 10g total fat, 2g saturated fat, 35mg cholesterol, 510mg sodium, 28g carbohydrate, 4g dietary fiber, 9g sugars, 13g protein, 35%DV vitamin A, 30%DV vitamin C, 4%DV calcium, 10%DV iron.

Exchange: 1 Starch, 2 Vegetable, 1 Meat (L), 1 Fat

Chicken Mango Spinach Salad

Prep: 10 minutes

- 1 bag (10 oz.) baby spinach leaves
- 1 medium mango, peeled, sliced
- 1 medium avocado, peeled, sliced
- 1 small red onion, thinly sliced
- 2/3 cup KRAFT LIGHT DONE RIGHT! Raspberry Vinaigrette Reduced Fat Dressing
- 2 cups cooked chicken strips (about 10 oz.)

TOSS spinach with mango, avocado and onion in large bowl. Add dressing; mix lightly.

SPOON onto 5 plates; top with chicken.

SERVE immediately.

Makes 5 servings, about 2 cups each.

Nutrition Bonus: For a delightful change of pace, serve this colorful low calorie main-dish salad for dinner. It contains spinach, which is both rich in vitamin A and a good source of vitamin C.

Nutrition Information Per Serving: 290 calories, 15g total fat, 2.5g saturated fat, 50mg cholesterol, 390mg sodium, 21g carbohydrate, 5g dietary fiber, 13g sugars, 19g protein, 110%DV vitamin A, 50%DV vitamin C, 8%DV calcium, 15%DV iron.

Exchange: 1 Fruit, 1 Vegetable, 2 Meat (L), 2 Fat

Dietary Exchanges based on Exchange Lists for Meal Planning ©2003 by the American Diabetes Association and the American Dietetic Association