



... It's Worth the Trip!



THINKING OUTSIDE THE BOX

Spicy "Primavera" Pasta

Depending on age, sex, and physical activity, the recommended daily intake for grain products varies. On average, American adults need about 5 to 8 ounce equivalents of grains each day. Examples of an ounce equivalent include 1 slice of bread, 1 cup of cereal, 1/2 cup of cooked pasta or rice. Americans have no difficulty consuming the recommended level of intake. In fact, on average, our consumption of grains is very excessive. This is mainly due to larger than necessary portion sizes at meals, which could be adding to our excessive daily caloric intake and resulting in our lower than desired fruit and vegetable consumption. A key strategy to assist with meeting weight goals is to keep the portion sizes of grains in check while filling up on fruits and vegetables.

Grains are divided into 2 subgroups: Whole Grains and Refined Grains. A whole grain contains all edible parts of the grain, including the bran, germ, and endosperm. Refined grains have been processed and many of the nutrients such as protein, vitamins and minerals have been significantly decreased. For example a 1-cup serving of cooked whole-wheat pasta has about 23% of your daily fiber (white pasta has 9%) and 16% of your protein. Put simply, whole grain products are nutritionally superior to refined grains.

Although many studies show that people eating refined starches have higher rates of obesity, diabetes, and heart disease compared to those who consume whole grains, most of the grains consumed by Americans are refined. In fact, only 10% of Americans consume the recommended minimum of 3 servings of whole grains per day. A reason for lower than optimal intake is possibly due to the perceived taste and texture of whole grain products from the years past. There is good news, though; the taste, quality, variety, and availability of whole grain products have exponentially increased over the years. It truly isn't a burden on the palate to make the majority of your grain foods be whole grain! Give them a try. Ease into the switch by choosing whole grain snack foods like popcorn and whole grain cereals, breads, and pastas.

To be sure you choose whole grain products, look at the ingredient list for the word "whole" preceding the grain (such as "whole wheat flour") or are 1 of the grains listed in the text box. An additional way to identify whole grain products is to look for the FDA approved health claim "Diets rich in whole grain foods and other plant foods and low in total fat, saturated fat, and cholesterol may reduce the risk of heart disease and some cancers," and/or the Whole Grain Council's whole-grain stamp on the food package. If all of the grains in the product(s) are whole grain, the stamp also displays a "100%" banner.

This meal features whole grain pasta paired with fresh vegetables in a spicy, balsamic vinaigrette and chicken. Try this meal out and then experiment in the future by varying the vegetables and protein. The combinations are endless.

- **Whole oats/oatmeal, whole wheat flour, whole-grain barley, and/or whole rye**
- **Popcorn**
- **Brown rice or wild rice**
- **Buckwheat**
- **Quinoa, millet, bulgur (cracked wheat), and or sorghum**



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Directions:

- 1) Prepare the produce by dicing 1 medium onion, quartering 1 medium zucchini lengthwise and then slicing, cutting 10 cherry tomatoes in half, and mincing 5 garlic cloves. Set aside.
- 2) Thinly slice 1 lb. boneless, skinless chicken breast.
- 3) Begin cooking 8 oz. of dry whole wheat/grain pasta according to package directions.
- 4) Meanwhile, in a large skillet heat 2 tbsp. of olive oil. Add the chicken and diced onion and cook over medium heat until almost all of the pink coloring of the chicken is gone and the onions are nearly tender. Add the zucchini along with 1/2 tsp. of red pepper flakes, garlic and 1 tsp. of balsamic vinegar and cook for about

Serves: 4

2 minutes and then add the tomatoes. Salt and pepper to taste and then cook an additional 2 minutes. Set aside.

5) When tender, drain the pasta and add to the chicken vegetable mixture. Stir in 1 additional tbsp. of balsamic vinegar, 1/2 oz. of freshly grated parmesan cheese and 1 tbsp. of chopped parsley (optional).

6) Divide the mixture into 4 bowls and top a touch of additional freshly grated parmesan cheese. Add a piece of your favorite in-season fresh fruit to round out the meal.

Tips: None

DISCLAIMER: YOU MAY USE ANY LIKE PRODUCTS OF ANY BRAND IN MAKING THIS HEALTHY CHOICE MEAL. THE PICTURES HERE ARE NOT AN ENDORSEMENT OF THESE PRODUCTS.

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