

Kelly Wagonik, Editor / 734-958-2105, kwagonik@cc.home.comcast.net / On 700, Web At 11/17/01, 01:53 PM / Monday, July 14, 1998



## Home-grown produce is the very best

The blossoming market for all things herbal has Michigan farmers adding new varieties to their crops. New farms, whose only focus is herbs and specialty produce, are also taking root. Across the country, people are popping capsules, sipping teas and changing their diet to ward off flu, brighten their moods and rev up their romantic life.

In addition to all the bottled herb concoctions and health potions, there is a whole line of so-called "functional foods" popping up at a grocery store near you. Fruit juices laced with ginger, corn chilis with Kava, feed to pick you up as well as food to bring you down. Many of our national food chains and drug companies are finding their way into the health food game.

It is estimated that 60 million Americans are now swallowing herbal doses of some form regularly. Americans are rediscovering the healing power of plants and home-grown produce, making the return to an ancient form of medicine that was our mainstay for thousands of years - and that remains so for 80 percent of the world's people.

My sister and I have a small booth at the Royal Oak Farmer's Market, where I have been afforded a bird's-eye view of what local farmers grow.

Greg Marcsizewski of Blooming Farms in Grand Blanc, a regular at the market, said his business that he started 11 years ago as a hobby of sorts has turned into a thriving 31-acre vocation for himself and his wife, Diane.

He grows a large variety of culinary, medicinal and aromatic herbs as well as other produce, including baby greens.

Many of his customers are buying green foliage, including St. Johns Wort, Echinacea, Skull Cap and Ginger Root, to have a potted pharmacy and culinary cabinet at their fingertips.

Greg suggests tossing herbs such as basil, sorrel, caraway, salad burnnet, lovage and dill into your next salad. These herbs promise to perk up your taste buds as well as your feeling of well-being.

Another Royal Oak Market favorite of mine are Heather and her chef-husband, Bob Rosenkrantz.

They are cultivating an array of medicinal and culinary herbs and are known for their special ointments, elixirs and powders. They also offer some of the best Chai and Farm blend teas that I've had the good fortune to sample.

Heather said all of their culinary herbs have health and healing properties. She suggests growing your own herbs, potted or directly in the soil.

"Remember during the growing season to trim buds and leaves to zip up your salads, summer vegetable dishes as well as fun treats such as herb pizza!"

To harvest herbs at the end of the growing season, hang and dry them in a dark place, such as a closet, for a week. Pick leaves and stems in an airtight glass jar and live the freshness of your garden in your winter fare.

Glen, my produce purveyor, reports the following up-and-coming Michigan produce.

Local crops are rolling in by the truckload: lettuce, spinach, cucumbers, strawberries, cherries, cabbage, kale and the famous Michigan morels and chanterelles.

Expect awesome fresh corn by next week. By mid-July, anticipate peppers, all stone fruits, Honey rock, blueberries, raspberries, watermelons, a variety of squashes, tomatoes of every shape, size and color, local asparagus and more!

**Chief Kelli L. Lewton is owner of 2 Unique Caterers and Event Planners in Bloomfield Hills. A graduate of Schoolcraft College's Culinary Arts program, Kelli is a part-time instructor at the college. Look for her column in Taste on the second Sunday of the month. See recipes inside.**

## 2 UNIQUE

When you travel, staying on the road is good for your health.

Staying faithful to a healthy diet can be a challenge when you travel. A puzzled observation from Europeans is that we Americans eat in our cars. Eating on the road is commonplace. For me, it is an everyday occurrence. I stash food in my glove box where others keep maps and pens.

We often don't take time to sit down at a table and eat - there are too many things that need to be accomplished. But besides food spills in the car, the problem with eating on the run is that we may not make good food choices.

When we're on vacation many of us don't have as many healthy foods as we should. We stay up late, and eat the foods that we enjoy but aren't necessarily nutritious. Vacations last only a short time.

If your job frequently takes you away from home, you may need to develop some good eating strategies. For instance, take advantage of local specialties that are good and fun for you to eat. Going to the East Coast? Try lobster at a lobster pound. To the West Coast? Enjoy Dungeness crab and salmon.

If you are driving, stop at roadside markets. Cherries in Traverse City; peaches in Romeo, Ontario and Georgia; melons in Texas; oranges in Florida. You get the idea. Some hotels have a bowl of apples right at check-in!

Convenience stores have started selling fresh fruit. You can fill up your car tank with gas and buy yourself a banana for the road.

Foreign versions of fast food. In England it's called a "take-away." They have small sandwiches prepared "to go." English bakers make up sandwiches on multi-grain rolls and sell bananas, apples, bottled water and juices.

In Mexico City, fruit stands on the street offer juices and cut-up fruit in cups. Sometimes you can't tell by looking whether it is sanitary. The safest place to buy is in a store front or restaurant with modern facilities. Street-side stands aren't worth the risk. In the Third World it may be wise to buy fruit and vegetables yourself, clean them with disinfectant and peel just before eating.

However, if you're unsure, stick to cooked foods. Drink coffee, bottled water, beer or soda without ice. Cooked vegetables, soups and stews are better choices than a fresh salad. Brush your teeth with bottled water even if the sign says the water is "potable."

Ordering a freshly prepared dish from the restaurant menu may be a better choice than eating from the buffet. If your travel takes you to a hot climate in a foreign country, refrigeration might be less regulated with rules for keeping food "hot" or "cold" frequently lax.

High altitudes cause you to become tired more quickly and eat-

## WHEN TRAVELING

# Stay ON THE road TO good health



By PEGGY MARTINELLI-EVERTS  
SPECIAL WRITER

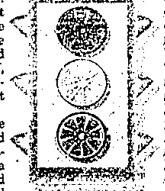
### Foreign versions

ing lighter is a wise choice until you become acclimated to altitude and the time zone change. Note - the effects of alcohol are more pronounced as well.

Be creative. Quick, tasty and nutritious food can be found in convenience stores, service stations, grocery stores as well as restaurants. Choose wisely and you can stay healthy as you travel.

### Coffee pot cuisine

When staying in a hotel, usually you are forced to dine out, because the room offers no kitchen. However, if you have a coffee pot, you're in luck! We've developed some "coffee pot cuisine" recipes to make right in good old Mr. Coffee. Pack the ingredients in your suitcase (they're light, portable and nutritious) then enjoy a hot meal anywhere a coffeemaker is available. These economical recipes are great for anyone who is watching their calories and their cash! See recipes inside.



Peggy Martinelli-Everts, R.D., a Clarkston resident, is a registered dietitian and director of clinical operations for HDS Services, a Farmington Hills based food service and hospitality management and consulting company. Look for her article on the second Sunday of the month in Taste.

### Healthy eating on the go

- "Fast food" is popular, predictable and, well, fast. It is also high in calories, low in calcium, fiber and vitamins A and C. Huge portions make it difficult to get the nutrients without a bunch of extra calories. A small hamburger, fries and soda pop could be as low as 700 calories. But, if you replace the soda with milk or orange juice, add a salad and forgo the fries, the meal becomes fairly healthy.
- Food prepared away from home tends to be salty. Watch out for pickles, olives, potato chips, and smoked, cured or processed meats. Go easy on extra salt or you'll feel bloated and thirsty later on.
- Often restaurants will "bundle" foods together to make a meal. Don't feel like you have to have everything that is offered. Skip the higher calorie, fried or creamed foods, or ask for a smaller serving of everything.
- Try to eat at "normal" times so you don't become famished and chow down without thinking about what you're eating.
- Make a meal out of a side dish. A baked potato with broccoli and a carton of milk can be quite filling. Same with a large salad, a roll and milk or juice.
- Select breakfast foods carefully. A plain egg is better than bacon, egg and cheese on a biscuit. A bagel is better than a doughnut. Ready-to-eat cereal is better than a bran muffin.
- Drink lots of water and other hydrating fluids. Being inside an airplane or traveling in a car can be dehydrating, so drink up. You can often prevent "jet lag" by avoiding alcohol and caffeine-containing fluids.
- Check the menu for foods denoted to be "healthy." Look for items made with less fat, oil, salt or sugar. Don't be shy about asking that food be prepared the way you want it. Most restaurants are able to handle simple and reasonable requests.
- As always, choose baked, broiled, steamed or poached meats. Trim away extra fat. Choose poultry or fish. Select low fat dairy products. Ask for sauces, gravies, dressings and margarine on the side. Cheese flavored vinegars, spicy mustard, horseradish, lemon or reduced calorie salad dressings.
- Check out the vegetarian choices on the menu. Often those are high in fiber and other nutrients and low in fat and calories. Watch out for the cheese, it can be high in fat. Pasta with vegetables or a tomato sauce is filling and nutritious.
- Find travel sized foods in the grocery store. Look for dried fruits like raisins, dates or apricots. Pick up granola or cereal bars or pretzel crackers. Stash these in your car with juice boxes.
- When served a bread basket in a restaurant, take the packaged crackers and breadsticks that come with it. These are great foods to keep in your glove box for the road.
- Order foods a la carte or from the appetizer section of the menu. You can reduce calories because the portion sizes aren't so enormous.
- Traveling can do a number on your work-out schedule. If you cannot exercise on the road, then watch your calories. Otherwise, you'll bring back more than souvenir matches from your trip.

## Make ahead Oriental chicken salad a cool company dish



MURIEL C. WAGNER

I envy cooks who seem so calm when company arrives for a meal. I've given up trying to uncover their secrets. Instead, I concentrate on developing my own strategy.

One of my joys is to develop a repertoire of delicious recipes that can be prepared ahead of time and that actually improve on standing. Of course, they must meet my criteria for smart eating as well - low-fat, high fiber and taste tempting.

This recipe for Oriental Chicken Salad is just that. It actually needs to be prepared ahead. The flavor improves while it waits to be served. It combines low fat, high fiber ingredients with my favorite Chinese sweet-sour flavors.

I poach my chicken breasts for the recipe in one of those prepared herb-seasoned broths. I'm a lazy cook, remember? For this and the roasted garlic flavor enhances the final taste. Be sure to keep the broth at a simmer temperature when you're cooking the chicken. Boiling toughens the meat. If you're planning to use the broth again,

bring it to a full rolling boil to be on the safe side.

I like my chicken breasts torn in large pieces, rather than cut into strips or chopped. You'll note from the ingredient list that most of the ingredients are also in large recognizable pieces. One of the advantages of overnight marinating is that the ingredients become flavored throughout.

The Italian dressing may seem a strange choice for a salad with Oriental flavors, but I like a dressing that blends all the ingredients. That's difficult to achieve unless you use lots of oil. If you want to reduce the sodium content, a fat reduced, low sodium broth can stand in for the Italian dressing. The other flavors, particularly the Chinese Five Spice Powder, soy sauce and ginger will add the flavor accents that any Chinese. You can call it my version of "fusion" cooking.

The Chinese Five Spice Powder is a blend of star anise, Szechwan pepper and fennel or anise seeds with cinnamon and cloves and possibly licorice root, cardamom or ginger. It has a licorice accent. You could make it yourself but I buy mine in the Oriental food section of my favorite supermarket. The toasted sesame seeds add an interesting flavor accent. Don't skip these.

### ORIENTAL CHICKEN SALAD

- 5 chicken breast halves, cooked and torn into strips
  - 1/2 cup baby carrots, washed and peeled.
  - 1 cup broccoli florets, washed
  - 1 cup pea pods, washed and trimmed
  - 6 green onions, washed and sliced
  - 3 stalks bok-choy or celery, washed and cut into 1-inch pieces.
  - 1 can (8 oz.) sliced water chestnuts, drained
  - 1 can (9 oz.) mandarin orange sections, drained
  - 2 tablespoons sesame seeds, toasted
  - 1 recipe nonfat Oriental dressing
- Cook carrots on HIGH in microwave for 1 minute. Chill immediately in ice water. Repeat process for broccoli. Microwave pea pods for only 1/2 minute on HIGH and chill immediately in ice water. Drain all ingredients and combine. Pour Oriental dressing over all ingredients and marinate at least 4 hours in refrigerator. Arrange on leaf lettuce and sprinkle with sesame seeds that have been lightly browned over low heat in a skillet treated with nonstick spray. Serves 6.

### NONFAT ORIENTAL DRESSING

- 3/4 cup nonfat Oriental dressing
  - 1 tablespoon dry sherry or orange juice
  - 1 tablespoon low-sodium soy sauce
  - 2 cloves garlic, minced
  - 1 teaspoon fresh ginger, peeled and minced
  - 1/2 teaspoon Chinese Five Spice Powder
- Mix all the above ingredients well. Refrigerate.
- Nutrition Facts: Calories 210; Fat 3.1 g; Saturated Fat 0.6 g; Cholesterol 62 mg; Sodium 586 mg.
- Food Exchanges: 3 lean meat, 2 vegetable.

Look for Main Dish Miracle on the second Sunday of the month in Taste. Muriel C. Wagner is a registered dietitian and nutrition therapist with an office in Southfield. She publishes "Eating Younger," a quarterly newsletter with recipes and nutrition tips. To subscribe, send a check for \$18.00 to "Eating Younger," P.O. Box 69021, Pleasant Ridge, MI 48069.

### LOOKING AHEAD

What to watch for in Taste next week:  
■ Ice cream  
■ Focus on Wine