

# Dinners have Mediterranean flavor

Great-tasting, healthful and convenient are the watchwords for right-for-today dinners. Nutrition, taste, and time-conscious cooks want easy-to-fix foods with fabulous flavors that fit the lighter, healthier way most of us are now trying to eat.

Two new recipes from home economists at Uncle Ben's were created with today's savvy cooks in mind. Each recipe teams bold Mediterranean flavors with new Uncle Ben's Country Inn Recipes Rice Dishes for delicious, low-fat dinners that can be brought to the table in about half an hour.

When prepared, the new rice dishes have all the great taste and wholesome country goodness of Uncle Ben's previous recipes, but they now have only 1/2 the fat.

Mediterranean Fish Fillets with broccoli & White Cheddar Rice features the cook's choice of fish fillets topped with basil and Parmesan cheese. The fish bakes briefly while the Broccoli & White Cheddar Rice simmers to perfection in just 20 minutes. Plum tomatoes and green

onions, added just before serving, add bright color and flavor contrast to the rice, and lemon wedges add tangy-fresh taste to the fish.

Basil-Pepper Beef with Broccoli Rice Au Gratin begins with beef tenderloin slices coated with garlic, basil and pepper and quickly cooked in a skillet as the Broccoli Rice Au Gratin simmers. The beef is topped with bell peppers seasoned with a splash of balsamic vinegar, and chopped tomato brightens the creamy broccoli and 3-cheese rice dish. Ready to serve in short order, the satisfying dinner "weighs in" at only 272 calories per serving.

## MEDITERRANEAN FISH FILLETS WITH BROCCOLI AND WHITE CHEDDAR RICE

1 package (4.9 ounces) Uncle Ben's Country Inn Recipes — Broccoli & White Cheddar Rice  
4 (4-ounce) orange roughy or red snapper fillets or other favorite fish fillets  
1/2 to 3/4 teaspoon dried basil leaves, crushed, as de-

sired  
4 teaspoons grated Parmesan cheese  
2 plum tomatoes or 1 small tomato, diced  
2 tablespoons thinly sliced green onion with top  
Lemon wedges

Cook rice according to package directions. While rice simmers, preheat oven to 450°F. Place fish in 11 by 7-inch baking dish. Sprinkle evenly with basil and cheese. Bake fish 10 minutes per inch of thickness or until cooked through. Stir tomato and green onion into hot, cooked rice; serve alongside fish with lemon wedges. Makes 4 servings, 286 calories per serving.

## ASIL-PEPPER BEEF WITH BROCCOLI RICE AU GRATIN

1 package (4.5 ounces) Uncle Ben's Country Inn Recipes — Broccoli Rice Au Gratin  
4 (3-ounce) slices trimmed beef tenderloin, about 1/2-inch thick  
2 cloves garlic, minced

1 1/2 teaspoons dried basil, crushed  
1/2 teaspoon freshly cracked black pepper  
Vegetable oil cooking spray  
1 cup short, thin red and green bell pepper strips  
1/4 cup beef broth  
2 tablespoons balsamic vinegar  
1 small tomato or 2 plum tomatoes, chopped  
Cook rice according to package directions. While rice simmers, press garlic, basil and pepper into both sides of meat. Spray skillet with cooking spray; heat over medium heat. Add meat and cook about 3 minutes per side for medium-rare.

Remove meat from skillet and keep warm. Add peppers, broth and vinegar to skillet; cook and stir 5 minutes to soften peppers and tender and most of liquid has evaporated, adding any accumulated meat juices during the last minute of cooking. Spoon pepper mixture over meat.

Stir tomato into rice; serve alongside meat. Makes 4 servings, 272 calories per serving.



UNCLE BEN'S COUNTRY INN RECIPES RICE DISHES

Great-tasting: Light and low-fat Mediterranean Fish Fillets with Broccoli and White Cheddar Rice can be brought to the table in about half an hour.

# Make snacks work for you by making healthy choices



LOIS THIELEKE

Snacks are more than just something to grab and eat after school or while watching television. Snacks can be healthy if we eat foods that supply our bodies with nutrients. With careful planning you can make snack food work for you to replace skipped meals, to control weight, to delay hunger, to replace omitted desserts, to supply quick energy, to quench thirst or to add missing nutrients.

Although the best-liked, sweet snacks, are candy and soft drinks, they supply little else other than energy (calories) and are really the "Number One" enemy to healthy teeth and a trim waistline. Choose sweet snacks only when in a while or only eat a small serving.

Save your breakfast muffin or fruit for a mid-morning snack instead of a baked sweet roll or a doughnut or piece of cake. Choose snacks that also provide dietary fiber as well as other nutrients, such as eating an apple or raw vegetables. If you choose a sticky snack food, such as dried fruits, brush your teeth soon after eating.

Eating sticky sweet foods frequently without brushing your teeth may lead to tooth decay.

When you buy a fruit drink, make sure it's 100 percent pure juice. Look for those with Vitamin C added. Bored juices are handy — there's no danger of breakage and you can freeze them overnight to pack with lunches. The juice will help keep other foods cool, and it will be thawed by lunch.

Avoid a super sweet juice, and fruit flavored drinks may contain no fruit juice at all. Twelve ounces of fruit drink, or punch often contain corn syrup and other sugars equal to about 12 teaspoons of table sugar.

Make your own frozen yogurt by adding fruit juice concentrate to plain yogurt and pour into paper cups. Partially freeze, add popsize sticks and freeze hard until time for a snack, or a canned vegetable drink can be heated, served in a mug with pretzels on a cold winter afternoon.

Unsweetened applesauce, dry cereal, fresh fruits, yogurt, apple butter or peanut butter will all help to satisfy that sweet tooth.

Poach apples in cider with a dash of cinnamon, a thin slice of angel food cake, or a fruit kabob served with cheese are all snacks that are low in calories but satisfying.

When nothing else will do except a salty food, make a lightly salty food, such as lightly salted or special popcorn. Not the mi-

crowave variety unless it contains less salt and fat. Toast a snack mix of cereals with a hint of margarine and seasonings such as garlic onion or chili powder. This is easy to carry around and a non-messy treat.

Whole grain crackers plain or spread with peanut butter or a fruit spread, pretzels instead of potato chips, saltine crackers instead of Ritz crackers are all good snack choices.

Beware of high fat desserts, you may have made the right choices for the snack or meal but then blow it with the dessert. Buy low-fat cookies and crackers but keep a mindful eye on the calories too. Melba toast, crisp bread, fig bars, graham crackers or gingeranaps are good choices. Instead of buying sweet treats, make your own cookies, quick

breads, muffins or cupcakes with less sugar and fat.

Use whole grain flours and oatmeal, add shredded vegetables or chopped dried fruit for a nutrient and fiber bonus. Adding applesauce will help sweeten many of these products.

Poor snacking can sabotage even the best of intentions of cutting down on calories. Since many times snacking is done out of boredom, plan some more activities you enjoy and that will get your mind off food. Be creative. Plan your snacks when you plan your meals. Regardless of your age, nutritious snacks planned as part of the day's food can be important in meeting nutrient needs.

Lois Thieleke is a home economist for the Oakland County Cooperative Extension Service office.

## COOKING CALENDAR

To get your classes listed in this column, send items to be considered for publication to: Keely Wygonik, Taste Editor, The Observer & Eccentric, 36251 Schoolcraft Road, Livonia 48150.

**CHEF SEMINAR**  
Fifth Annual Chef's Seminar at Schoolcraft College, 18600 Haggerty Road, Livonia, 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Monday, March 8. Cost is \$150. Participating chefs include Milos Cibulko, Brian Polcyn, Marcus Haight, and Tom MacKinnon. To register, call 402-4448.

**KITCHEN GLAMOR**  
Michigan Chef series continues

with Ed Janos, Certified Executive Chef, 12:30 p.m. Sunday, March 7 at Kitchen Glamor in West Bloomfield. Cost \$40 per class. For information, call 537-1300. Elaine Caulfield demonstrates coffee cakes and sweet rolls, 1 and 7 p.m. Feb. Tuesday, Feb. 23, Nov; Wednesday, Feb. 24, Redford; Thursday, Feb. 25, West Bloomfield and Friday, Feb. 26, Rochester. Cost is \$3.

**FARMINGTON COMMUNITY CENTER**  
Judy Antishin is cooking at the Farmington/Farmington Hills Community Center. A special dinner party cooking class will be presented, 7-9 p.m. Thursday,

Feb. 25. The cost is \$15. Call 477-8404 to register.

**COOKING ADVENTURE**  
The Mystery and Excitement of the Black Truffle, one hour demonstration by Chef Keith Farnie at Les Saisons in Royal Oak, 6 p.m. Tuesday, Feb. 23, followed by five course dinner, complete with wines for each course. Cost \$75 per person not including gratuity and tax. Limited seating, call 645-3400.

**RICHARD SIMMONS**  
Richard Simmons will appear at Livonia Mall, Middlebelt and Seven Mile Roads, 1-3 p.m. Saturday, March 6.

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