

Meatballs from page 1B

**Sour Cream.**  
Use the Healthy Choice ground beef to make hamburgers. Season it like you would regular beef, grill and top with a slice of Kraft fat free cheese. Serve it on Aunt Millie's fat free hamburger buns for a low fat meal.

With the start of the new year, Britcher decided to make some changes in her daily eating and exercise habits. She began using a NordicTrack for 20 minutes a day, seven days a week, and started eating low fat meals.

Her blood cholesterol dropped from 223 to 166. She also faces the

daily challenge of eating low fat in a family of "regular" eaters. Her husband Bill, and sons, Jamey and Matthew, are not interested in lowering their daily fat intake. Even still, she has lost 10 pounds, lowered her cholesterol, and even cheats. She is an inspiration to us all!

For a complimentary issue of the "Laura's Fat Free Kitchen" newsletter, send a self-addressed, stamped envelope to H.W. Publications, P.O. Box 9324, Livonia 48151-1324. Subscription price is \$12 a year.

Chomp those blooms

See Larry Jones' column on Taste front.

**BAKED STUFFED SQUASH BLOSSOMS**  
1/2 pound (about 1 cup) fresh ricotta cheese  
3 tablespoons fresh chopped parsley  
a pinch of fresh grated nutmeg  
3 tablespoons Parmesan cheese  
1 egg, beaten  
8 squash blossoms, rinsed  
2 cups tomato sauce  
In a bowl, combine ricotta cheese with parsley, nutmeg, Parmesan and egg. Mix well. Divide mixture evenly and stuff into squash blossoms. Place stuffed blossoms in an oven proof dish and add tomato sauce to the dish. Bake at 325 degrees for 30 minutes and serve immediately. Serves 4 (entree), or 8 (appetizer).  
Source: Daniela Luccherini, owner-chef of La Chiusa Restaurant in Montefalco, Italy

**MARINADE**  
1 cup flower flavored vinegar  
1 cup sweet red wine (i.e. sweet red vermouth)

Try these cool summer meals

See related story on Taste front.

**BLACK BEAN SALSA**  
1 can (15 ounces) black beans, rinsed, drained  
1 can (4 1/2 ounces) chopped ripe olives, drained  
1 small onion, finely chopped  
1 clove garlic, finely chopped  
2 tablespoons olive oil  
2 tablespoons lime juice  
2 tablespoons salt  
1 tablespoon chili powder  
1/4 teaspoon ground cumin  
1/4 teaspoon pepper  
Mix beans, olives, onion, garlic, oil, lime juice, salt, cumin and pepper. Cover and refrigerate 2 hours.

**TARRAGON DRESSING**  
1 1/4 cups vinegar  
1/4 teaspoon dry mustard  
2 1/2 cups salad oil  
4 teaspoons crushed garlic  
2 1/2 teaspoons salt  
2 1/2 teaspoons pepper  
1/4 cup capers  
1 1/4 cups honey  
2 1/2 teaspoons tarragon  
5 tablespoons chopped fresh parsley  
5 teaspoons chives  
large splash of lemon juice  
Whisk together the lemon juice, mustard, olive oil, garlic, salt and pepper. Add tarragon and blend well. When ready to serve, add parsley, chives and capers; mix well. Toss with assorted lettuces, serve with red onion, dried cherries and honey roasted peanuts. Also good with assorted seasonal fruits.

**ROSE FLAVORED VINEGAR**  
3 cups rose petals, stems and hearts removed  
1 quart good quality white vinegar  
1 quart jar  
Place rose petals in the quart jar and cover with white vinegar. Place in a sunny spot and allow to steep for 2 weeks. If desired, vinegar can be strained and rebottled.  
Chef's secret: different color roses will make different hues of vinegar. I made mine with white rose buds and no one could discern the "secret" in my vinaigrette.

**POLKA DOT CHICKEN PASTA SALAD**  
6 ounces uncooked no-egg pasta, any shape (half of a 12-ounce package or 1 cup)  
1 cup cooked chicken or turkey, skin and fat removed,  
cut into 1/2-inch chunks  
1 red Delicious apple, unpeeled and rinsed  
1 tablespoon lemon juice  
1 celery stalk  
3 green onions  
1 medium carrot  
1/4 cup drained pineapple tidbits, drained in fruit juice  
1/2 cup raisins  
1/4 cup low-fat lemon yogurt  
1/4 cup reduced-calorie mayonnaise  
1/4 teaspoon grated lemon rind  
1/4 teaspoon salt  
1/4 teaspoon ground white pepper  
Cook pasta according to package instructions, leaving out butter and salt. Drain pasta, place with cold water. Port pasta into a large bowl. Add chicken or turkey and toss with a wooden spoon. Set aside.  
Cut apple into quarters and remove seeds and core. Cut apples into 1/4-inch chunks. Place apple in a small bowl, add lemon juice and toss to coat apples evenly.  
Rinse celery and dry. Cut celery into thin slices (you'll get about 1/4 a cup). Rinse and cut green portions of onions, and discard white part. Add apple, celery and green onions to pasta mixture and toss.  
Peel and grate carrot and add to pasta mixture. Drain pineapple and add to pasta. Add raisins to pasta and toss to combine.  
In a medium bowl, combine yogurt, mayonnaise, lemon rind, salt and pepper for dressing. Mix with wire whisk until evenly blended. Add dressing to pasta and with a rubber spatula stir to combine. Cover and refrigerate for several hours before serving. Serve on lettuce if desired.  
Recipe from the American Heart Association Kids' Cookbook

Picnic from page 1B

she said. "You can freeze juice boxes to keep things cold and enjoy a cold drink. I cut up apples and put lemon juice on the slices to keep them from turning brown. We make our own snack mix with gold fish crackers, Fruit Loops, raisins, Cheerios and nuts. I just look to see what's in the cupboard and toss something together. Chocolate chips and M&Ms are good to toss in, but they can get messy."

Her children like peanut butter and jelly sandwiches, but sometimes Cox adds a little zip by mixing peanut butter with applesauce.

Dale Allmayer of Farmington, executive chef for La Petite Fleur, a catering and carryout business at 818 Bowers in Birmingham has plenty of good ideas for pick-up-and-go dinners and lunches.

"Hollow out an orange to make a basket for fruit salad," suggests Allmayer. "Fill it with blueberries, strawberries, raspberries and grapes."

"Rolled sandwiches made with flat bread will hold up very nicely. They won't get soggy. Fill them with chicken salad made with dried cherries instead of grapes or with avocado, lettuce, tomato, and sprouts."

Other good sandwich combinations are turkey, roast beef or ham with honey mustard.

His children, Lauren, 9, and Sydney, 3, like the sandwiches he makes by cutting out bread shapes with cookie cutters. He fills them with their favorites — peanut butter and jelly or tuna fish. Dale Allmayer prepared the

foods featured in our photo at La Petite Fleur.

Dale's parents, Wilma and Bruce Allmayer of Farmington Hills have years of experience packing picnic supplies. "We packed the sandwich fixings and bread separately and made our own sandwiches at the park," said Bruce Allmayer. "Chunks of ice last longer than a bag of ice, and you can use the water for drinking or cleaning up. We made our own chunks of ice by rinsing out milk cartons, filling them with water, and freezing overnight."

Some other picnic ideas Dale Allmayer offers are to stuff seasonal vegetables with seasoned cheese, make fruit kebabs and serve them with a dip.

Mike Thibault and Don Moore of the Cook's Garden Cafe in Birmingham like to pack a lot of fresh fruit for picnics. For a dip they use nonfat yogurt with granola and ground pecans. "Use lots of fresh herbs," said Thibault. "Make a potato salad with red skin potatoes, carrots, celery, Vidalia onions and a vinegar and oil dressing."

Hard cheeses like Swiss, mild cheddar, Colby, are their choices to pack with crackers and bread because they hold up well.

Instead of the usual pasta salad with curly noodles and mayo, Ron Coucke of Cookie's carryout and catering, 35558 Grand River, Farmington Hills, (810) 473-8300 recommends trying different shapes of pasta like sea shell or bowtie. Mix pasta with chunks of turkey, grilled chicken, and try different kinds of sauces.

Answers to food questions

For answers to questions about food safety, nutrition and preservation, call the Food and Nutrition Hot line, 830 to 5 p.m. Monday through Friday, 858-0904 in Oakland County, 494-3013 in Wayne County.

The Food and Nutrition Hot-

line is the place to call for all your food concerns. Questions on why your jam won't jell, or how to freeze those extra tomatoes are some common requests answered daily by the trained staff of the hotline.

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