

Banish picnic boredom with nutritious couscous

If you're looking for a quick, nutritious summer side dish beyond the usual rice, potatoes and pasta, consider the many advantages of couscous. Couscous is an excellent choice for adding low-fat complex carbohydrates to your diet. Made from refined wheat or semolina, this versatile grain offers the convenience of pasta with the light and fluffy texture of rice.

Because it's made with minimal effort in just minutes, couscous is ideal for hot summer months. Just bring the cooking liquid and seasonings to a boil, stir in the couscous and remove from heat. Let stand, covered, for five minutes and fluff when ready to serve.

Regular couscous is not a good source of fiber, so be sure to look for a whole grain variety or pair it with a variety of fiber-rich fruits and vegetables.

As an alternative to oatmeal or grits, try couscous as a breakfast

cereal. Heat 1-1/4 cups apple juice, 1/4 cup chopped, dried apricots, 1/4 cup chopped prunes and 1/4 teaspoon ground cinnamon to a boil over medium-high heat. Remove from the heat and stir in 3/4 cup couscous and 2 tablespoons chopped walnuts. Cover and let stand for 5 minutes. Fluff the couscous and serve topped with 1/4 cup non-fat yogurt.

Change the boiling liquid and spices and you can create endless varieties of couscous dishes. "South-of-the-Border" green chili couscous uses chicken broth as the boiling liquid and is seasoned with sliced green onion, diced green chili peppers and ground turmeric. For a side dish on the sweeter side that brings out the best in baked chicken or turkey, use apple juice as the boiling liquid for couscous and stir in sliced green onion, dried cherries or raisins, and ground cinnamon.

Couscous can even make a

refreshing, chilled dessert. Start by stirring 1/4 cup lemonade concentrate into cooked couscous and refrigerate one hour. Meanwhile, combine 2 cups plain non-fat yogurt, 1/2 cup sugar and 1-1/2 teaspoons vanilla.

Mix half of the yogurt mixture into the couscous, along with 1/2 cup each fresh blueberries, raspberries, strawberry halves and chopped peaches (or any combination of fresh fruit totaling 2-1/2 cups). Distribute the remaining yogurt mixture among the individual servings and garnish with mint leaves.

Asian-inspired couscous salad complements the flavors of grilled fish or chicken.

ORANGE SESAME COUSCOUS

1 cup fresh orange juice
1/2 cup chopped red or green bell pepper
1 teaspoon sesame oil
1/8 teaspoon salt

2/3 cup couscous (pre-cooked semolina)
1 orange, peeled, cut into bite-size pieces
3 tablespoons chopped green onion

In medium saucepan, combine orange juice, red pepper, sesame oil and salt. Bring just to boil and stir in couscous. Cover the pan and remove from heat. Let stand for 5 minutes. Stir the couscous with a fork to fluff up mixture. Stir in orange pieces and green onions. Each of the three servings contains 211 calories and 2 grams of fat.

Recipe and information from the American Institute for Cancer Research. For a free brochure with recipes for when you have no time to cook, send a self-addressed, stamped (55-cents postage) business-sized envelope to AICR, Dept. TC, Washington, DC 20069.



AMERICAN INSTITUTE FOR CANCER RESEARCH

Zesty salad: Orange Sesame Couscous is an Asian-inspired salad that complements the flavors of grilled fish or chicken.

The material in this recipe was reviewed by Melanie Polk, Director of nutrition Education, American Institute for Cancer Research.

Wrap up tasty sandwiches, or toss a main dish salad

See related story on Taste front.

TOASTED CHICKEN AND SALAD WRAPS

1/3 cup unsalted, hulled sunflower or pumpkin seeds
1/2 cup toasted wheat germ
1 pound boned and skinned chicken breast halves
2 tablespoons Creole seasoning blend, divided
1 cup fat-free or reduced-fat mayonnaise
2 cups finely shredded napa or savoy cabbage
1/2 cup sliced green onions
1/2 cup diced red bell pepper
6 burrito-size flour tortillas, warmed
Fresh alfalfa sprouts (optional)

In large nonstick skillet, toast the sunflower seeds over medium-high heat, stirring frequently. Remove from heat and stir in wheat germ; transfer to plate to cool. Spray same skillet with cooking spray. Sprinkle chicken with 1 tablespoon of the Creole seasoning. Cook over medium-high heat, 3 to 4 minutes on each side, or until no longer pink in center.

Remove chicken from skillet; cool. When cool enough to handle, shred or coarsely chop chicken. In large bowl, combine mayonnaise and remaining Creole seasoning; mix well. Add chicken, cabbage, onions, peppers and wheat germ mixture; mix well.

Spoon chicken down center of each tortilla, dividing evenly. Fold sides of tortilla to center, overlap

ping edges; fold bottom of tortilla under, completely enclosing filling. Spoon alfalfa sprouts into opening at top of wrap. Serve immediately or wrap well and refrigerate up to 8 hours. Serves 6.

Nutrition facts: 1/6 of recipe, 450 calories, calories from fat 120, total fat 14 g, saturated fat 3 g, cholesterol 50mg, sodium 1,660 mg, carbohydrate 55 g, dietary fiber 6g, protein 29g (27% calories from fat).

Recipe from Ann Chupita, New Brighton, Minn., grand prize winner in the Kretschmer Wheat Germ "Healthy Eating Made Easy & Delicious" recipe contest.

VEGGIE LAWASH SANDWICH

Serves 2
1 Lawash bread (3 ounces)
1/2 cup alfalfa sprouts
1 small tomato, sliced
1/4 cup cucumber, sliced thin
1/3 cup lettuce, shredded
2 ounces (3 slices) American cheese, light
1/4 cup red onion, sliced thin
1/4 cup ranch dressing, fat-free

Lay bread out flat on cutting board. Spread out and layer alfalfa, tomato, cucumber, lettuce, cheese and onion on bread. Pour ranch dressing over ingredients. Roll up bread and cut in half. Can also use dressing like a dip.

Nutrition facts: per serving, 254 calories, calories from fat 54,

(21% calories from fat), total fat 6g, saturated fat 3g, cholesterol 16mg, sodium 828mg, total carbohydrate 38g, dietary fiber 2g, protein 12g.
Recipe from Julianne Steinhilber, registered dietitian, Garden City Hospital.

CREAMY POTATO SALAD WITH CHICKEN AND GREEN BEANS

Makes 4 servings

2 cups defatted chicken broth

3/4 pound boneless, skinless chicken breast

6 medium-size red potatoes (1-1/2 pounds) sliced into wedges (do not peel)

1/2 pound green beans, cut into 1-1/2-inch pieces

1 red bell pepper, diced

1/4 cup diced red onion

2 tablespoons minced fresh dill or 1 tablespoon dried

2 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil or herb-flavored oil

2 tablespoons white wine vinegar

1 cup nonfat buttermilk

Salt and pepper to taste

About 8 cups chopped lettuce or torn mixed greens

2 large tomatoes, diced

In a medium saucepan, bring the broth and chicken just to a boil, reduce the heat to low and poach the chicken until white and firm throughout, about 15 minutes. Remove the chicken from the pan. Cool the chicken, dice and set aside.

Add the potatoes to the broth, adding water to cover. Cover the pan, bring to a boil, and boil gently until the potatoes are tender, about 8 minutes. Plunge into cold water to stop the cooking; drain well.

Blanch the green beans in boiling water to cover for 1 minute. Plunge into cold water to stop the cooking; drain well.

In a large salad bowl, combine the chicken, potatoes, green beans, red pepper, onion and dill. Add the oil and vinegar and toss well. Add the buttermilk and toss. Taste and adjust the seasonings, adding salt, plenty of pepper and more dill, if needed. Chill before serving.

Place a bed of lettuce or greens on individual plates or in a large serving bowl. Add the tomatoes to the potatoes and toss. Spoon the salad over the greens and serve.

Recipe from "Salad Suppers" by Andrea Chesman (Chapters Publishing, \$12.95 softcover).

Jam with fresh picked produce

See related story on Taste front.

DOUBLE BERRY FREEZER JAM

2 cups crushed strawberries
2 cups raspberries
2 tablespoons lemon juice
2 tablespoons orange juice
1 tablespoon grated orange peel
6 cups sugar
3/4 cup water
1 package powdered pectin

Prepare canning jars and lids according to manufacturer's instructions.

Combine strawberries, raspberries, lemon juice, orange juice and grated orange peel in a large bowl. Add sugar; mix well and let stand 10 minutes.

Combine water and pectin in a small saucepan. Bring to a boil and boil 1 minute. Add pectin to fruit mixture and stir 4 minutes.

Carefully ladle jam into jars, leaving 1/2-inch headspace. Wipe jar rim clean. Place lid on jar with sealing band next to glass. Screw band down evenly and firmly. Do not use excessive force. Let stand

at room temperature until set, up to 24 hours. Store in freezer. Yield about 8 half-pints.
Recipe from Alltrista Consumer Products Company

SWEET-TART PEACH MELBA SPREAD

2 cups crushed, peeled, pitted peaches
2 cups crushed red raspberries
1 cup water
1 teaspoon lemon juice
1 package no sugar needed pectin
1-1/2 cups sugar

Prepare home canning jars and lids according to manufacturer's instructions.

Combine peaches, raspberries, water and lemon juice in a large sauce pot. Gradually stir in pectin. Bring mixture to a boil, stirring constantly. Add sugar and return to a rolling boil. Boil hard for 1 minute, stirring constantly. Remove from heat. Skim foam, if necessary. Carefully ladle hot spread into hot jars, leaving 1/4-inch headspace. Wipe jar rim

clean. Place lid on jar with sealing compound next to glass. Screw band down evenly and firmly until fingertip tight.

Process 10 minutes in a boiling water canner. Yield about five 8-ounce jars.

Recipe from Ball Corporation

RASPBERRY JAM

2 quarts raspberries
1 package powdered pectin
1/3 cup water
1 tablespoon grated lemon peel
1 tablespoon lemon juice
6 cups sugar

Combine raspberries, pectin, water, lemon peel and lemon juice in a large sauce pot. Bring to a boil over high heat, stirring frequently. Add sugar, stirring until dissolved.

Return to a rolling boil. Boil hard 1 minute, stirring constantly. Remove from heat. Skim foam if necessary. Ladle hot jam into hot jars, leaving 1/4-inch headspace. Adjust two-piece caps. Process 10 minutes in a boiling-water canner. Yield about 5 half-pints.

Recipe from Ball Corporation

Slow food worth the wait, effort

See related story on Taste front.

Here are a couple of slow-cooking side dishes from Chef Rick Halberg.

BASIC POLENTA

2 cups corn meal
1/2 gallon (8 cups) cold water
2 sticks unsalted butter
1 cup freshly grated Parmesan cheese or Grana cheese
1 tablespoon fresh rosemary, chopped
Salt and pepper to taste

Add corn meal to cold water and mix well with a wire whip, bring slowly to a boil stirring frequently.

Season with salt and pepper and rosemary. Allow to cook over low

heat for about 1/2 hour, still stirring regularly until thick and very smooth.

When cooked, remove from heat and stir in the butter and cheese. Check seasoning and pour into half of a sheet pan lined with parchment paper and chill until ready to use, or serve immediately while still hot and soft.

When thoroughly chilled polenta can be cut into shapes and browned in clarified butter or olive oil.

Great served as a side dish with grilled steak, chicken or vegetables. Serves 6-8.

SWEET POTATOES WITH VANILLA BEAN CREAM

12 good-size sweet potatoes

1 quart heavy cream
3 vanilla beans, split and scraped
1/2 pound soft unsalted butter

Salt and pepper to taste

Roast potatoes in a preheated 375 degree F. oven until very soft. When cool enough to handle, peel and pass through a food mill or mash well.

Make a reduction of 1 quart heavy cream, 3 vanilla beans, split and scraped. Cook until reduced to 3 cups. Scrape the seeds into the cream.

For 3 quarts mashed sweet potatoes use 1-1/2 cups of the cream reduction and 1/2 pound soft unsalted butter and season with salt and pepper. Serves 12.

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