



MARY'S MEMO

Recipes • Menu Ideas • Shopping • Cooking Tips

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Chief and Rays Supermarkets

SOUNDS GOOD TO ME!

Australian researchers asked 1,216 older women how often they consumed chocolate. Those who said they had at least a serving a week were 24 percent less likely to experience hospitalization or death from heart disease or heart failure over about 10 years, compared with those who said they ate chocolate less frequently.

SOURCE: Consumer Reports on Health, February 2011.

TEMPERATURE: A MAJOR FACTOR IN FOOD SAFETY

The "danger zone" in which harmful bacteria are most likely to grow is 40 to 140 degrees. Food should remain in this range a maximum of two hours. The safest temperature in your refrigerator is 34 to 40 degrees. The safest temperature for your freezer is 0 degrees. To insure that your appliances stay at the appropriate temperature, your best bet is an appliance thermometer.

SOURCE: Weill Cornell Medical College Food & Fitness Advisor, February, 2011.

STORING AND COOKING WHOLE GRAINS

The germ in whole grain contains oil, which may eventually become rancid if the grain is not stored properly. Store whole grains in airtight containers in a cool, dry place away from direct light for up to 2 months. During hot weather or if your kitchen is warm, store tightly wrapped grains in the refrigerator or freezer, where they will keep 6 to 12 months.

Cook grains in a heavy pan that distributes heat evenly. This is especially important for grains like amaranth, cornmeal and rolled oats that cook into porridge.

Since cooking time for whole grains can be long, it is a good strategy to cook extra whenever you are cooking a grain. Also, consider cooking breakfast cereals like steel-cut oats the night before. Cooked grains will keep for up to 3 days in the refrigerator or for up to 4 months in the freezer. Thaw if necessary, add a few tablespoons water and reheat in the microwave. Alternatively, recycle cooked grains in a soup or grain salad.

SOURCE: Tufts University Health & Nutrition Letter, February 2011.

RECIPES OF THE WEEK

Here's another macaroni and cheese recipe with cubes of ham and frozen peas. Sliced stuffed olives give it additional flavor! Add a salad and fruit for dessert and your meal is complete.

MACARONI AND CHEESE WITH HAM CASSEROLE

- (1) 8-oz. package whole wheat elbow macaroni, cooked according to package directions
- ¼ cup butter
- ¼ cup flour
- ½ teaspoon salt
- ¼ teaspoon pepper

- ½ teaspoon dry mustard
- 3½ cups milk (whatever kind you have on hand)
- 1½ cups shredded sharp Cheddar cheese
- ½ cup sliced stuffed olives
- 1 tablespoon dry minced onion
- (1) 10-oz. pkg. frozen peas, thawed enough to separate
- 2 to 3 cups cubed cooked ham
- Cheese Crumb Topping

Melt butter in large saucepan. Stir in flour, salt, pepper and dry mustard. Gradually add milk, stirring until thickened. Add cheese, stuffed olives, minced onion, peas, ham and cooked macaroni. Spoon into 3-quart oblong casserole and sprinkle with Cheese Crumb Topping. Bake in preheated 350°F oven until bubbly. Recipe makes 8 servings.

To make topping, combine ¼ cup shredded sharp Cheddar cheese, 2 tablespoons dry bread crumbs and 2 tablespoons melted butter.

When you're looking for more "cheap eats" Potato and Egg Casserole is right on target. It gets most of its protein from eggs and cheese with just a bit of bacon.

POTATO AND EGG CASSEROLE

- 6 strips lean bacon
- 4 medium potatoes, cooked and sliced
- 6 hard-cooked eggs, sliced
- 1 can Campbell's Healthy Request Cream of Chicken soup
- 1 cup milk (whatever kind you have on hand)
- ¼ teaspoon kosher salt
- ¼ teaspoon fresh ground pepper
- ¼ cup finely chopped onion
- 1½ cups shredded sharp Cheddar cheese (reduced-fat kind if available)

Microwave bacon until crisp; crumble. Spray 2-quart casserole with non-stick spray. Layer potatoes, bacon, eggs and cheese in prepared dish. Blend soup and milk. Add salt, pepper and chopped onion. Pour over casserole mixture. Bake in preheated 350°F oven for 30 minutes or until bubbly. Recipe makes 6 servings.

WHOLE GRAIN CHIPS ARE BETTER CHOICE

I admit to being addicted to chips of any kind. Once the bag is opened and chips crunch in my mouth I'm a goner! So when I wrestle with this addiction in the chip aisle of the supermarket, eating a whole grain "crunchy" makes me feel less guilty. In fact *Cooking Light's What to Eat Guide*, published by Oxmoor House in 2010, suggests corn chips like Lay's Fritos and Scoops because they fit the crunchy, salty snack bill plus their first ingredient is whole corn. But regardless of the type chip you choose, portion control is vital.