

Raising The Salad Bar

DS HELPS YOU BUILD A BETTER SALAD. By Karlyn Grimes, MS RD

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With the new year rapidly approaching and a flurry of holiday gatherings competing for spots on your social calendar, it's time to think about how to keep your waistline in check and your energy levels soaring as you navigate your busier-than-ever schedule. When heavy party foods start to weigh you down, a trip to the salad bar may be just what your body needs to keep you feeling light and full of holiday cheer.

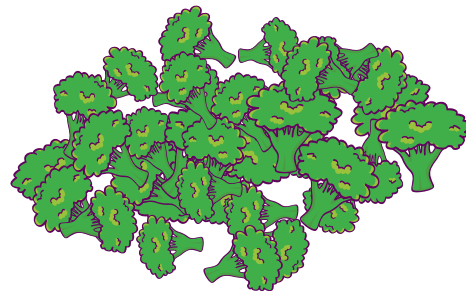
Health officials recommend that an American consuming a 2,000 calorie diet gobble up two cups of fruits and two-and-a-half cups of veggies each day. Unfortunately, the Produce for Better Health Foundation says fewer than 1 in 10 Americans report eating the recommended amount. Worried about meeting this lofty goal? A well-balanced salad may be the perfect solution. For instance, a salad that includes one cup of dark green lettuce, half a cup of chopped peppers, half a cup of broccoli, five cherry tomatoes (considered half a cup) and one medium carrot will provide your recommended daily dose of veggies and fruits all in one bowl. (Check out mypyramid.gov/pyramid for more great ways to boost your daily fruit and veggie intake.)

WHAT'S SO SPECIAL ABOUT SALAD?

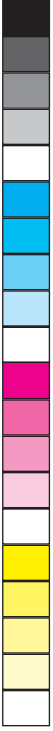
Developing a taste for salads can be a great tool for busy dancers looking

A well-balanced salad will provide your recommended daily dose of veggies and fruits all in one bowl.

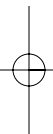
A colorful salad is a healthy salad.



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for a quick way to take in a lot of key nutrients at once. Fruits and vegetables pack a serious nutritional punch and salads filled with them are high in disease-fighting vitamins and minerals such as vitamin C, beta carotene, folate and potassium. Fruits and vegetables are also chock full of phytochemicals (phyto = plant), which help fight colds and relieve sore muscles (plus, they give produce their color, taste and aroma). Healthy salads are also high in fiber, a filling nutrient that will help keep hunger at bay and your digestive tract on track.

There are so many fruits and vegetables available, possible salad combinations are endless. But beware: not *all* salads are healthy. For example, if your salad bowl is filled with colorless iceberg lettuce, a few carrot slivers, croutons and a heaping ladle-full of creamy dressing, or your idea of a healthy salad involves the words “Caesar” or “taco,” you may need to make over your salad to ensure you’re getting the most nutritional bang for your buck. Here are some simple tips to help get your salad in shape.



THE PERFECT BOWL

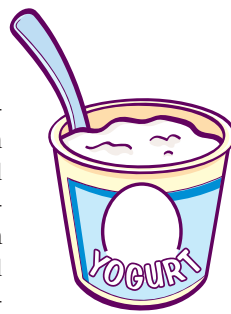
Start with a huge bowl. Yes, this is one of the few times when we won't

automatically recommend the smallest serving size! In fact, imagine your bowl has a device on the side to measure the nutritional value of your salad: Add healthy ingredients and the points on your meter will increase, but add less-favorable elements to your salad, like bacon or creamy dressings, and the points will plummet.

TASTE THE RAINBOW

Color is key. Be sure to add at least one dark green, one deep orange, one blazing red and one bright yellow veggie to your bowl. To satisfy your sweet tooth, toss some chopped fresh fruit into the mix, as well.

Grapes, apples and strawberries are especially nutritious and delicious.



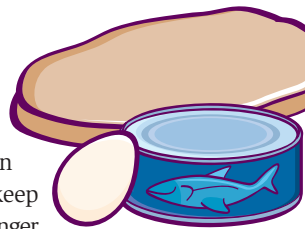
IT'S NOT EASY BEING CREAMY

Watch out for pre-made potato, egg, tuna and chicken salads and cole slaw, but feel free

to mix up your own using low-fat mayonnaise or plain yogurt. Keep in mind that mayonnaise can be particularly damaging to the healthy value of a salad, so limit your intake of creamy mixes.

PUMP UP THE PROTEIN

Topping your salad with lean proteins will keep you satisfied longer and provide the building blocks for strong muscles. Meats such as grilled chicken breast, turkey, freshly cooked salmon and swordfish, canned albacore tuna packed in water, or even hard boiled eggs, can do the trick. Those looking for non-animal-based protein sources should consider adding moderate amounts of tofu, nuts, beans, other legumes or avocado to the mix. Cheese lovers might opt for a dollop of low-fat cottage cheese, or a sprinkle of parmesan, asiago, feta or part-skim mozzarella, each of which will give your greens a serious protein *and* calcium lift.



DRESSING UP

Dressings can make or break a salad. Go for the ones that contain healthy plant-based oils such as olive, canola, peanut and flaxseed oil. But keep in mind that even though salad dressings containing these oils are heart healthy, they still check in at 9 to 12 grams of fat per serving. Consider giving nonfat or low-fat dressings a try, but be aware that many of these can have high sugar content. Dressings with no more than three grams of fat and 200 milligrams of salt per two tablespoon serving are ideal.



Gourmè Mist's mini misters

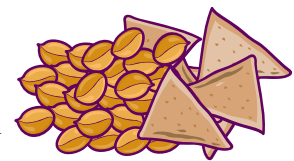
DRESSING TO GO

Now that you know how to create your best salad, you need tasty (and healthy) dressing. Enter the new mini misters from Gourmè Mist. These 3.5 ounce portable salad dressings are just \$4.99 each. They come in a variety of flavors and each mist is less than 5 calories. Pick your fave flave, toss it in your dance bag and mist away!

Yogurt-based dressings are another nutrient-packed option. At restaurants, ask for your salad dressing on the side, so you can monitor the amount you take in. No matter which dressing you choose, it is essential to use it sparingly!

A LITTLE EXTRA

Finally, to give your salads a crunchy kick, sprinkle low fat granola, wheat germ, ground flaxseed or crumbled pita chips on top. You can also consider other unique additions like nuts, seeds, celery salt, fresh ground pepper and even a splash of lemon juice to put a new twist on your favorite fruit and veggie combo.



You now have all the tools to build a healthy and colorful salad. The beauty of these guidelines is that they're flexible enough to leave you room to experiment with new combinations all the time. Continually switch up the mix to keep your tastebuds tantalized and your cravings on course. We bet you'll never think of salads as boring again! **DS**

Karlyn Grimes, a registered dietitian, holds a dual master's degree in nutrition and exercise physiology from Boston University and is a faculty member in the Nutrition and Biology departments at Simmons College in Boston.