

# Eat your peas: Varying your veggies

Tired of the daily struggle of getting kids to eat their veggies? Are you eating salad after salad in order to meet your veggie needs? I often find myself in a "veggie rut," continually turning to the same few choices when it comes to preparing vegetables. It's not a matter of preference-I love nearly every vegetable under the sun-rather it's a familiarity and ease factor. Try varying your vegetables to surprise your taste buds and reduce boredom at mealtime-for you and your family.

## Get sneaky

Even for those of us who enjoy (yes, enjoy) eating vegetables, it can be a tall order to consume the recommended amount each day. Add bulk to meals by incorporating vegetables in places you wouldn't necessarily think.

- Pureed pumpkin or butternut squash can do wonders for your favorite macaroni and cheese recipe or Saturday morning pancakes.
- Want to add eggs-and bacon, in moderation-to a special weekend brunch? Incorporate veggies in omelets, frittatas, and egg scrambles to pack in nutrients at breakfast.
- Try mashed cauliflower in place of mashed potatoes.
- Love a good smoothie? Include spinach, celery, kale, carrots, cucumber...you get the point. When balanced with whole fruit, the flavor of the veggies is often masked and overcome with natural sweetness from the fruit.
- Have a sweet tooth? Include grated carrots or zucchini in quick bread recipes for a crowd-pleaser that still incorporates some veggies.
- Pizza lovers take note-throw on an extra handful of peppers, onions, mushrooms, or broccoli to your pie. Think along these same lines when cooking up tacos or quesadillas.

## Follow the Half and Half Rule

When making dishes that revolve around pasta, make sure the dish includes equal parts green and grain. For example, if you plan to make tortellini, beef it up with an equal amount roasted Brussels sprouts. Better yet, you could choose to skip the pasta altogether and instead go for spaghetti squash or spiralized zucchini noodles. Finally, skip the store-bought jarred sauce and go for an easy homemade version that includes tons of fresh veggies like peppers, onion, and garlic.

## Experiment with Cooking

If you constantly rely on the same cooking method for vegetables, search the web for recipes and ways to switch it up. Raw, roasted, sautéed, stir-fried, or grilled, the options are endless. Play with seasonings to keep it fresh and interesting, finding ways to complement your entrée.

Up for a challenge? Use the tips above to incorporate veggies in at least one way at each meal-including breakfast! Happy eating!

***Contributed by Anna M. Albritton, MS, RD, LD, CDE***

