



**EAT RIGHT MONTANA**

*A coalition promoting healthy eating and active lifestyles*

[www.eatrightmontana.org](http://www.eatrightmontana.org)

December 2010

Dear Colleagues,

**Welcome to the final issue of Eat Right Montana's 2010 campaign: *Treasure Your Family's Health: Back-to-Basics with Food & Fitness.*** In our holiday issue, we discuss how paying more attention to your food can be healthier and more satisfying. We feature a tasty nut and fruit bar recipe, as well as information about nuts and baking bars.

When it comes to making food choices, the concept of listening to internal signals goes by different names. You can read about mindful eating at [www.tcme.org](http://www.tcme.org), while intuitive eating is outlined online at [www.intuitiveeating.com](http://www.intuitiveeating.com). Both have a similar goal: To rely less on external rules and more on inner cues of hunger and satisfaction.

**Media Release:**

*Savoring Holiday Foods for Comfort, Joy, and Good Health*

**Nutrition Basics:**

*Enjoy the Benefits of Nuts and Seeds*

**December Recipe:**

*Oatmeal, Fruit, and Nut Bars*

**Cooking Basics:**

*Bake Better Bar Cookies*

**Fitness Basics:**

*Be Active - and Give a Gift TOO!*

We welcome any comments and suggestions. Wherever possible, we want to incorporate your ideas and put them into our packets. Just send your thoughts to me at [EatRightMT2000@gmail.com](mailto:EatRightMT2000@gmail.com) - and remember, past issues of **Healthy Families** and other ERM materials are available on the ERM web site at [www.eatrightmontana.org/](http://www.eatrightmontana.org/).

*Dayle Hayes, MS, RD*

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**Treasure Your Family's Health: Back-to-Basics 2010**



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**MT Department of Public Health & Human Services**

December 2010

## Savoring Holiday Foods for Comfort, Joy, and Good Health

Ah December in Montana! When holiday goodies are the focus of every event from neighborhood cookie exchanges to office parties, the world can feel like an endless nutrition minefield. Then, on top of all the eating and drinking, there's plenty of unrealistic holiday health advice from all sorts of 'experts.'

"The national holiday food frenzy can be difficult to navigate," says Dayle Hayes, MS, RD (registered dietitian) and president of Nutrition for the Future in Billings. "With a diet looming on the January horizon, many Americans throw caution to the wind and gobble up everything in sight. This overindulgence often leaves us overstuffed, physically uncomfortable, and feeling guilty." Fortunately, there is another approach.

According to Hayes, you can survive the stressful eating season with your health and holiday spirit intact. The key is to slow down and take the time to really savor whatever you are eating. "As a nation, we tend to eat quickly and not pay much attention to the flavors and textures of our food," she explains. "When we eat hurriedly, we often eat more than we want with less satisfaction." In other countries, like Italy, France, China, and Argentina, mealtimes tend to be longer, with family and friends lingering at the table to talk.

To savor food means, "to taste appreciatively" or "to relish." When we appreciate and relish our food, we often eat less and enjoy it more. If you are used to chowing down and moving on, paying attention to food may take a little practice. Hayes suggests these strategies to help you savor the food at any holiday event.

- **Prevent overeating by not getting overly hungry:** It is difficult, if not impossible, to make smart food choices when you are super hungry. Deprivation naturally leads to overeating at parties or buffets filled with tempting goodies. Instead of starving before parties, eat regular meals and have a protein snack before you go out. A cup of soup, a string cheese, a piece of beef jerky, or a handful of nuts work well.
- **Eat and drink slowly while listening to internal cues of satiety (fullness):** When you eat too quickly or while doing other things, it's easy to overeat – past the point of pleasure and even past the point of physical comfort. Real satisfaction comes from eating slowly, from savoring the aromas, textures and flavors of food, and from letting your body say, "that's plenty," before you are overly stuffed.
- **Take a time-out from food to check your stress levels:** Much of our usual holiday eating and drinking has nothing to do with hunger or fullness. It's a way to cope with tense situations or difficult people. If this happens to you, move away from the food and spend some quality time with a friend – or walk around the block. Often, this is all it takes to realize that stuffing more food will make you feel worse rather than better.

"If you want to eat well this holiday, there is no need to call in the food police or hope that a Grinch steals all your Christmas cookies," says Hayes. "By practicing some basic self-care and by listening to your body, you can enjoy all your favorite holiday meals and treats with comfort – and in good health."

Past and current issues of Eat Right Montana's monthly packets can be downloaded for free at [www.eatrightmontana.org/eatrighthealthyfamilies.htm](http://www.eatrightmontana.org/eatrighthealthyfamilies.htm)

## 5 Delicious Ways to Enjoy the Benefits of Nuts and Seeds

Nuts and seeds are powerhouses of both nutrition and taste. Packed safely in their own natural shells, nuts and seeds are nutrient-rich because they contain everything that a new plant needs to grow: energy, protein, vitamins, minerals, and 'good' fats, such as heart-healthy omega-3 and monounsaturated fatty acids.

### 1. Vary the types of nuts and seeds.

Nuts and seeds are not all created equal. By varying the types of nuts and seeds you eat, you will get different vitamins (especially B-vitamins, E, and K) and minerals (including copper, iron, selenium, and zinc), as well as important disease-fighting antioxidants (like zeaxanthin which helps prevent age-related macular degeneration).

### 2. Snack on a handful of nuts or seeds.

Since nuts and seeds are calorie-dense as well as nutrient-rich, it's smart to consider portion size. One ounce - a small handful - is generally considered to be a serving with 160 to 200 calories. To create personal sized snacks, divide a container of shelled nuts or seeds into small plastic bags with a handful (10-24 nuts depending on type) in each.

### 3. Sprinkle nuts and seeds into meals.

Nuts and seeds are more than healthful snacks. A sprinkling of either one adds flavor and nutrients to any meal. Consider adding a sprinkling of almonds to a morning bowl of oatmeal, sunflowers seeds to a lunchtime spinach salad, or walnuts to a pasta dish for dinner. Nuts and seeds can also be sprinkled on yogurt, veggies, and desserts.

### 4. Spread on a bit of nut or seed butter.

Peanut butter, the most common 'nut' butter, is not actually made with nuts. Peanuts are legumes, like dried beans. Cashew, almond, and sun butters are widely available and may be good substitutes for those with peanut allergies. *Nutella*® is a popular European spread made with hazelnuts, while tahini is made from sesame seeds.

### 5. Bake with nuts and seeds.

Nuts and seeds are perfect for pumping up the nutritional value of pancakes, waffles, breads, rolls, and muffins, as well as cookies and bars. Almost any nuts or seeds can be chopped and added to your favorite baked recipe. Flax seeds - a very rich source of omega-3 fatty acids - can be ground and successfully added to many baked items.



## Oatmeal, Fruit, and Nut Bars

### Ingredients:

- 1 cup brown sugar
- 2/3 cup sugar
- 1/4 cup margarine or butter
- 3 eggs
- 1 tsp. vanilla
- 1 1/4 cup peanut butter
- 4 1/2 cups oatmeal
- 2 tsp. baking soda
- 2 cups total of crasins (dried cranberries), walnuts, pecans, chocolate covered raisins, raisins, chopped dried apricots or chocolate chips (one or a mixture)

### Instructions:

- 1) Cream sugars and margarine/butter; add eggs, and vanilla; blend in peanut butter.
- 2) Stir in oatmeal and baking soda.
- 3) Mix in nuts, dried fruit, and/or chocolate chips.
- 4) Spread in a 15x10 inch baking pan and bake at 350 for 20 - 25 minutes. Don't over bake. If they are browning too quickly, you may want to cover them with foil the last 5 - 10 minutes.

**YIELD: Makes 40 2-inch square bars**

### Getting kids cooking:

- Invite children to choose the types of fruits and nuts to be added to the recipe.
- Have children measure ingredients, especially easier items like sugar and oatmeal.
- If age-appropriate, allow children to hand mix the oatmeal and baking soda together - and to crack eggs. They can also carefully add items to the mixer and finally mix wet and dry ingredients.

### Nutrition Analysis

(Using 3/4 cup crasins (dried cranberries), 1 cup dried apricots, and 1/4 cup walnuts)

|                          |                      |
|--------------------------|----------------------|
| Serving Size: 2-inch sq. | Total Carb: 25.3 g   |
| Calories: 183            | Dietary Fiber: 2.6 g |
| Total Fat: 7.3 g         | Sodium: 69 mg        |
| Calories from Fat: 35.8% | Protein: 5.7 g       |
| Saturated Fat: 1.9 g     | Calcium: 21.5 mg     |
| Trans Fat: 0.0 g         | Iron: 1.2 mg         |

### Source:

Tara Andrews

MSU Extension, Custer County

## 5 Smart Ways to Bake Better Bar Cookies

Easier to prepare and bake than regular cookies, bars are simple, versatile treats that can be filled with nutrient-rich ingredients like whole grains, fruit, nuts, and seeds. Bars are often served from the pan - making them the perfect holiday hostess gift or buffet contribution. For bars that are pretty enough to give as gifts, use a sharp chef's knife to trim away any dry outer edges and cut bars to medium-size pieces.

### **1. Use the right sized pan.**

When baking bar cookies, pay close attention to the size of the pan specified in the recipe. Using the wrong size pan changes the depth of the batter, which affects both cooking times and the texture of the bars. A pan that is too large can lead to dry, thin bars, while one that is too small can result in bars that are gummy in the center and more cakey than desired.

### **2. Prepare the pan properly.**

For best results, use nonstick vegetable spray or solid shortening to grease baking pans or sheets. Salted butter may cause bars to stick or to get overly brown on the bottom. You can also line the pan with aluminum foil or parchment paper to insure easy removal. Most wrapped bars can be stored at room temperature for 3-4 days or frozen for several weeks.

### **3. Use the right kind of oil.**

Always follow recipe directions for the type of oil (liquid oil, butter, solid shortening, or margarine) to be used. While regular butter and margarine can usually be substituted for one another, never use any product labeled as whipped, diet, or spread in making bar cookies. These products contain extra water and air, which can result in gooey textures.

### **4. Do not over-mix the dough.**

As with quick breads and other cookie dough, it is important to prevent the gluten in the flour from developing too much. Thoroughly mix wet and dry ingredients (including the flour) separately. Once the two have been combined, stir only enough to moisten the dry ingredients. Too much mixing develops more gluten and leads to tough textures.

### **5. Monitor cooking times carefully.**

Ideally, bake one pan of bar cookies at a time, placing the pan on a rack in the center of the oven. If using a glass or dark pan, reduce oven temperature by 25 degrees F. Check bars at least 5 minutes before the minimum baking time suggested in the recipe. Bars are done when a wooden pick inserted in the center comes out clean.



## 5 Simple Ways to Be Active - and Give a Gift TOO!

In our busy, stressful lives, two things can be in short supply (especially at the holidays) - time and money. We don't have time to go to the gym or stick to a fitness routine. And, we don't have money for all the presents we want to give or all the donations we want to make. These simple, active solutions solve both problems at once!

### **1. Walk someone's dog.**

Both dogs and their walkers get real health benefits. For older folks or those with disabilities, getting a dog out and about can be difficult. Offer to regularly walk a friend or neighbor's dog and everyone wins. You've given someone a real gift, plus both you and the dog will be in better shape. Shelter dogs also need walking, which can be your donation to the facility.

### **2. Play with someone's kids.**

Children nearly always have more energy than busy parents, especially single parents. And, most American kids aren't getting anywhere near the 60 minutes of daily activity they need. Set up a regular playdate for sledding, biking, Frisbee® or shooting hoops - and you will give your nieces, nephews, or neighbors (and their parents) a precious gift.

### **3. Remove someone's snow.**

In Montana, getting rid of snow can be a regular fitness activity for several months of the year. Helping a relative, friend, or neighbor keep their sidewalks and driveway clear can be a real gift to them - and outdoor physical activity for you! (To be safe and injury-free, make sure to wear hat and gloves; warm up before starting; and shovel small amounts carefully.)

### **4. Help with someone's yard work.**

All across the country, yard work is a year-round activity (which can be very expensive to pay for). If working outside is something you enjoy, give a neighbor, friend, or relative the gift of your time and energy. Better yet, offer to share yard time with someone: By working together in each other's yards, you'll have someone to talk to and the time will go faster.

### **5. Introduce someone to your favorite fitness activity.**

If you belong to a fitness center or gym - or take regular dance or yoga classes, invite a friend to go with you. Most businesses offer free passes to potential new members and many offer a two-for-one package, especially around the holidays. While there may be a small price-tag for this gift, you can offer courtesy 'chauffeur' services to get them there and back.