

News Column for Use Week of 1/21/2019
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National Soup Month

January is National Soup Month – What’s better on a cold winter day than a warm bowl of soup? Soup can be nutritious, easy to prepare, and inexpensive. It can be prepared with minimal clean-up, only needs one pot, and the combination of ingredients is unlimited. Soup is a great dish for a variety of palettes and can be tailored to be spicy, savory, or sweet. With January being National Soup Month, it’s a good time to think about how soup can fit into a healthy eating plan. Here are some helpful tips for making soup delicious and nutritious.

Soup for every season. As appetizers, side dishes, or main dishes, soups help celebrate the bounty of the four seasons. Soup can be thick and hearty, smooth and creamy, or savory. Soup can be served hot, such as minestrone, or cold such as cucumber soup.

Be sodium savvy. To keep soups tasty and healthy, use low-sodium broth, stock, or soup base for the foundation. Experiment with flavorful herbs and spices in place of salt. The most effective replacements are savory flavors with “bite,” such as black pepper, garlic powder, cumin, dill seeds, basil, ginger, coriander and onion. Use MINCED OR POWDERED garlic and onion rather than the salt form. When you are substituting minced or powdered garlic and onion for the salt version use about half as much in the recipe.

Make better choices. Ultimately the healthiest soups are the ones you make at home, but if not making homemade soup, use the Nutrition Facts Label to help choose canned soups with lower sodium levels. Foods with less than 140 milligrams (mg) sodium per serving can be labeled as low-sodium foods. Claims such as “low in sodium” or “very low in sodium” on the front of the food label can help identify foods that contain less salt. It is always best to check the nutrition facts label to be sure the amount of sodium per serving.

Choose healthier substitutions. Soup can be a healthy, inexpensive meal. Keep soups lower in fat and calories by using cheese, sour cream, or bacon sparingly as a topping or garnish. Or, choose healthier substitutes like reduced-fat shredded cheese, low-fat sour cream, non-fat plain yogurt, or turkey bacon. Substitute a whole-grain product for a refined product – such as using whole-wheat noodles, barley, or brown rice in soups and stews.

Cook once, eat twice. Homemade soups can be made ahead of time and in large quantities. Eat refrigerated soup within three to four days to freeze it. Don’t let soup set at room temperature for more than two hours. To speed cooling, store soups in shallow containers. When serving a second time, bring to a boil.

Challenge. During National Soup Month and beyond, experiment with different recipes and ingredient substitutions for healthier soups. Find ways to vary your vegetables with warm soups in colder months and focus on fruits and chilled soups in warmer months. University of Nebraska – Lincoln – UNL Extension. If you have any questions, please contact Sonia Cooper, River Valley Extension District, Washington Office, by emailing srcoper@ksu.edu or by calling 785-325-2121.