



Extension News Column

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To: Mary Beth Smetzer, community news editor, News-Miner, 459-7546 (wk), 452-7917 (fax), msmetzer@newsminer.com, and people@newsminer.com
From: Roxie Dinstel
Re: Regular CES column to run Tuesday, Feb. 7, on Our Town page

Additional

Contact: Debbie Carter, information officer, 474-5406, dscarter@alaska.edu

Valentine's Day is just around the corner. Taking your sweetie to a fancy restaurant can make a real dent in your pocketbook, and can add up to lots of extra calories and fat. Let's take a look at ways to spend less money and increase the nutritional value.

If you are looking for a healthy way to celebrate the holiday, take a look at these heart healthy treats. These snacks will get your heart pumping both literally and figuratively. They will help you maintain your cardiovascular health, save money, and you might even save a few calories.

Vegetables dipped in hummus. Fresh vegetables are low in calories, have lots of antioxidants, have no fat, and are loaded with fiber. Hummus is made from chickpeas (garbanzo beans) and is a great source of protein with no saturated fat. You can purchase it premade in the store, or blend a can of chickpeas with tahini, lemon juice, garlic, salt, and just a little olive oil for a great homemade version. A plate of vegetables (8 servings), cut up at home with commercial hummus will cost \$10.40. Make it yourself at a bargain price of \$7.50. Neither of these options come close to the cost in a restaurant.

Fruit skewers with a little dark chocolate for dipping. Thread your favorite fruit on skewers and provide a little melted chocolate from the microwave. Fruit has a variety of antioxidants to fight cancer and heart disease. Dark chocolate has flavenols, which have been shown to fight heart disease. Cost for a serving of pineapple, grapes, and oranges with melted chocolate \$7.20.

Brownies. Replace half the butter in brownies with applesauce or pureed prunes. It makes a very chocolaty brownie, reduces the fat, and you've added antioxidants that are present in the fruit. Using applesauce increases the cost of a batch of brownies by a twelve cents, but fewer calories is well worth the cost.

Switch your ice cream for fruit ices. A half a cup of ice cream has 29 mg of cholesterol, over 7 grams of saturated fat, and 184 calories. If you switch it for a fruit ice, there is no cholesterol, no saturated fat, and 70 calories. Cost of ice cream is \$1 for a half cup serving of the premium brand. Cost of fruit ice is about the same but far more nutritious. If you want to make a homemade version, blend 2 cups of fruit (bananas, blueberries and raspberries), with 2 cups of plain yogurt. Add $\frac{1}{4}$ cup of sugar if needed for sweetness. Freeze till firm. Cost for homemade version is \$.85 a serving.

Substitute angel food cake and fruit for chocolate cake. A piece of ice chocolate cake with icing has 367 calories. A piece of angel food has just 72 calories, no cholesterol and very little saturated fats. If you top it with $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of raspberries and just a little low calorie whipped topping, the calorie content is less than 170 calories for a cost of \$8.80 instead of \$14.00 for the chocolate cake.

Fruits are a great choice for great nutrition, even though they cost a little more. A serving of raspberries cost \$2, are loaded with antioxidants, fiber and potassium. They are one of the 40 best foods for heart health according to the Cleveland Clinic. They help lower blood pressure and boost good cholesterol.

Or try a peach at \$1.25, which is loaded with 2 grams of heart healthy fiber. Try cutting it in half and grilling it to caramelize the natural sugars.

So throw away the candy and calorie laden desserts. Valentine's Day can feature heart healthy treats for a low cost.

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