

## HEALTHY SUBSTITUTIONS THE EASY WAY

Have you ever heard the expression “the journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step?” We’re going to borrow it right now to get you on the journey to making easy and healthy substitutions when you cook and eat.



At some point in time butter became the enemy. During the 1970s, people blamed it for everything and then ran to margarine. When it turned out that margarine was not the best choice, people ran back to butter. Used in moderation, you can’t beat the flavor of butter as long as it’s the real thing. But how can you use less of it? You can use butter along with olive oil, canola oil or peanut oil when you are cooking. When it comes time to buttering the bread, muffin or bagel, try cream cheese, unsweetened jam or jelly. Or Willy’s favorite...peanut butter.



What about olive oil? First off, you want it to be EVO (Extra-Virgin Oil). If the bottle doesn’t say “extra-virgin,” it won’t have all the antioxidants that you’re looking for. It is the staple of the Mediterranean diet which just about everyone agrees is the best for your heart. Taste and price vary. Ideally, you’d like to buy the highest quality that you can afford. What you might not know about olive oil is that it comes in flavors. You can buy it flavored with basil, garlic, bacon, chipotle... the list goes on. You can learn how to flavor or “infuse” your own. Let the kids partake in this and create something wonderful!



Avocados make wonderful substitutes. They are delicious and so good for you. They are amazing in salads, can be spread on breakfast toast and put on a sandwich instead of mayonnaise or cheese. They’re nice and creamy. They are high in mineral content and have a good dose of vitamins, especially vitamin B and vitamin E. They’re also a great source of unsaturated fatty acids as well as dietary fiber. And the big surprise is that the avocado is a fruit and not a vegetable. If you live in the right climate you can buy a tree and grow your own.



Most of us grew up eating iceberg lettuce and it has a crunch that you can’t beat. But it doesn’t have much nutritional value. There are much better greens that are better for you. Spinach, kale, escarole (which is a little bitter), arugula, Bibb lettuce, endive, and the versatile butter lettuce to name just some of them. If you sense that your family is going to

protest to having the iceberg lettuce banished, you can use some in combination with the others. Then, use your new flavored olive oil to make salad dressing and prepare to see empty plates.



Do you know how much you can do with cottage cheese? It's not just for diet plates in restaurants anymore. You can use it in place of sour cream on a baked potato, as a substitute for ricotta cheese in lasagna, when you bake a cheesecake, with any kind of fruit for a fruit salad, on whole wheat toast with jam on top or you can just drizzle it with honey and cinnamon for as delicious dessert. You can also use it to thicken a sauce without having to add butter and flour. It is also packed with protein as an added plus. Just read the label and make sure you're getting the low-fat kind.



Who doesn't love a good tomato? If you're going to make a pizza at home, skip the jarred tomato sauce and use fresh tomatoes instead. It will taste fresh and keep away all of those additives. Use fresh tomatoes in spaghetti sauce, too (don't forget to use whole wheat pasta). Tomatoes are also very good on top of cream cheese and a bagel. And what tuna or egg salad sandwich isn't tastier with tomato slices on top?



Corn tortillas make a great substitute and snack. Corn tortillas have 58 calories each while a flour tortilla has 99 calories each. And the corn tortilla has only 42 mg of sodium while the flour one has 204. When it comes to fat, the flour one has 2.5 grams while the corn tortilla has only 1 gram. Use them instead of bread and make wraps with them. Heat, roll them up and eat them with your morning eggs. Put a little topping on them and stick them under the broiler for a snack. Heat them up and put some cottage cheese and cinnamon on them. See what other exciting things your kids can come up with.



On to applesauce! Make sure that you buy the unsweetened kind. You can use it for baking. Use it in place of butter and your creation will remain moist and delicious. Applesauce will also substitute for eggs when baking. The ratio of applesauce to butter is one to one. If a recipe calls for 1/2 cup of butter substitute a 1/2 cup of applesauce. For every large egg a recipe requires, use 1/4 cup of applesauce in its place. Applesauce is the perfect side dish for every sandwich and is also good on pancakes and latkes.

Now for some basics:

- Use whole-wheat flour, whenever you can, in place of white flour.
- Greek yogurt works in place of sour cream. You want to buy the all-natural kind.
- Ground turkey works in place of ground beef for just about anything.
- Oatmeal will make healthier meatballs and meatloaf than breadcrumbs.
- Instead of salt, use citrus juice or herbs that you like.
- Steam, grill or roast vegetables instead of boiling them and save those nutrients.
- Brown rice or wild rice is healthier than white. You can try bulgur, too.
- When baking you can reduce the amount of sugar you use by adding vanilla, cinnamon or nutmeg.
- Instead of bacon, you can try turkey bacon or Canadian bacon; they are both delicious.
- Don't butter your pans. Use cooking spray or non-stick pans instead and save the calories.

Congratulations...you've started on your journey. 😊

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