

Color your diet red, yellow, and green on Valentine's Day

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Did you know that aside from the color red, other colors may also be fashionable on Valentine's Day?

February may be the love month but love is not just about romance. Love includes self-love, or loving oneself, in order to be happy, productive, and be able to take care of loved ones.

One way of loving yourself is by taking good care of your body by eating the right kinds of food – from fruits, vegetables, and other foods which come in a burst of colors. According to the Daily Nutritional Guide for Filipino Adults developed by the Food and Nutrition Research Institute of the Department of Science and Technology (DOST-FNRI), one should take three servings of ½ cup of cooked vegetables and 2-3 servings of fruits every day.

There are many color-filled health-friendly dishes which you can whip up for your partner, or your family and friends to perk up your Valentine's Day lunch or dinner. Not only do they make the most romantic day of the year more exciting; they also make you healthier, more glowing, and more energetic.

For sun-burst orange-and-yellow Valentine treat, choose from a variety of foods such as melons, mangoes, peaches, papaya, oranges, banana, pineapple, passion fruit, carrots, sweet potatoes, squash and sweet corn. The vibrant colors of orange and yellow food look great on the plate and also help the eyes and skin. Carotenoids are responsible for these bright colors. The most common carotenoid is the beta-carotene which can be converted from foods into vitamin A in the body. This nutrient promotes good vision, a strong immune system, and helps reduce the risk of heart disease.

There are many ways to prepare your sunshiny Valentine treat. You can make your own homemade carrot and squash soup. You can also sprinkle grated carrot, papaya, mangoes or sweet potatoes to cheer up your salad. Or you can whip up a chunky fruit salad of melon, mango, peach, papaya, orange, pineapple, and sweet corn. For a dash of protein, you can mix tuna with sweet corn and use it to fill sandwiches.

The greens can actually make your heart red healthy, aside from lowering the risk of colon

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cancer for their full fiber content. For fresh and crisp hearts day feast, there are many greens to choose from, including asparagus, spinach, lettuce, cucumber, broccoli, sprouts, cabbage, green beans, green peas, green pepper, leeks, onion spring, green apples, grapes, and kiwi fruit. Many of these green foods are good sources of lutein which helps protect the eyes from macular degeneration that leads to blindness.

To eat more green foods, serve green vegetables with meals everyday. If you are fond of stews and stir fried food, leeks can be a welcome green addition, just like how green peas can freshen up pasta dishes, curries and even plain boiled rice. For breakfast, spring onions and green peas can fill up omelets.

Blue and purple hearts may not be good, but blue and purple foods are good for the heart. Choose from grapes, plums, prunes, eggplant and raisins, all packed with anthocyanins that can protect against cancer and risk of heart disease. Moreover, these foods tend to help lower blood pressure and cholesterol levels.

To increase your blue and purple food intake, try adding a tablespoon of raisins to breakfast cereals or porridge. You can also make a healthy coleslaw using grated carrot, thinly sliced onion, shredded cabbage and raisins mixed with low-fat yogurt to keep the calories down. For pasta lovers, eggplant is a welcome addition to the meat mixture for lasagna.

White foods such as onions, garlic and turnips are known to reduce heart disease, as well as pain and swelling associated with inflammatory conditions like osteo- and rheumatoid arthritis. Garlic contains antioxidant called allicin that acts as natural antibiotic and helps reduce blood pressure.

Add more whites to your diet by adding onions and garlic to stir fried foods, pasta dishes, stew and curries. You can also make your own onion garlic dip or roast onions in a little olive oil to go with vegetables. Finely chopped onions can be mixed also to tuna, chicken and egg sandwich fillings.

Red foods such as strawberries, cherries, red apples, tomatoes, grapefruit and red peppers are high in lycopene that can help protect against cancers of the lung, colon, breast and skin. The reds may also help lower blood cholesterol and reduce the risk of heart disease.

To have more red in your diet, add sliced red peppers and apples to salad, or a can of tomato sauce or chopped tomatoes to stews and casseroles. Home-made tomato soup is also a welcome treat. You can also try adding a handful of strawberries and red apples to breakfast cereals or porridge.

With many colors to choose from, Valentine's Day will not only be colorful and hearty but also healthy. Enjoy the love month this year and the following years with a healthy heart, strengthened by food with a rainbow of colors.

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