



# National Nutrition Month® 2022 Activity Booklet

Nutrition and Food Services



VA



U.S. Department  
of Veterans Affairs

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# Introduction

National Nutrition Month® is celebrated every March by nutrition professionals and encourages the public to make informed choices about food and nutrition to improve their health. Registered Dietitian Nutritionists (RDNs) can help you learn to eat a balanced diet, lead an active lifestyle, and prevent and manage chronic diseases.

The 2022 National Nutrition Month® theme "Celebrate a World of Flavors" encourages you to follow the MyPlate® style of eating to promote balanced and healthful meals across all cultures and cuisines.

In this National Nutrition Month® 2022 activity booklet you will find handouts and recipes from six different cultures that showcase how to "Celebrate a World of Flavors." Also included are trivia and quizzes to test your food and nutrition knowledge.

We hope you enjoy this fun and interactive activity booklet about nutrition. We encourage you share these resources with family and friends in celebration of National Nutrition Month®.

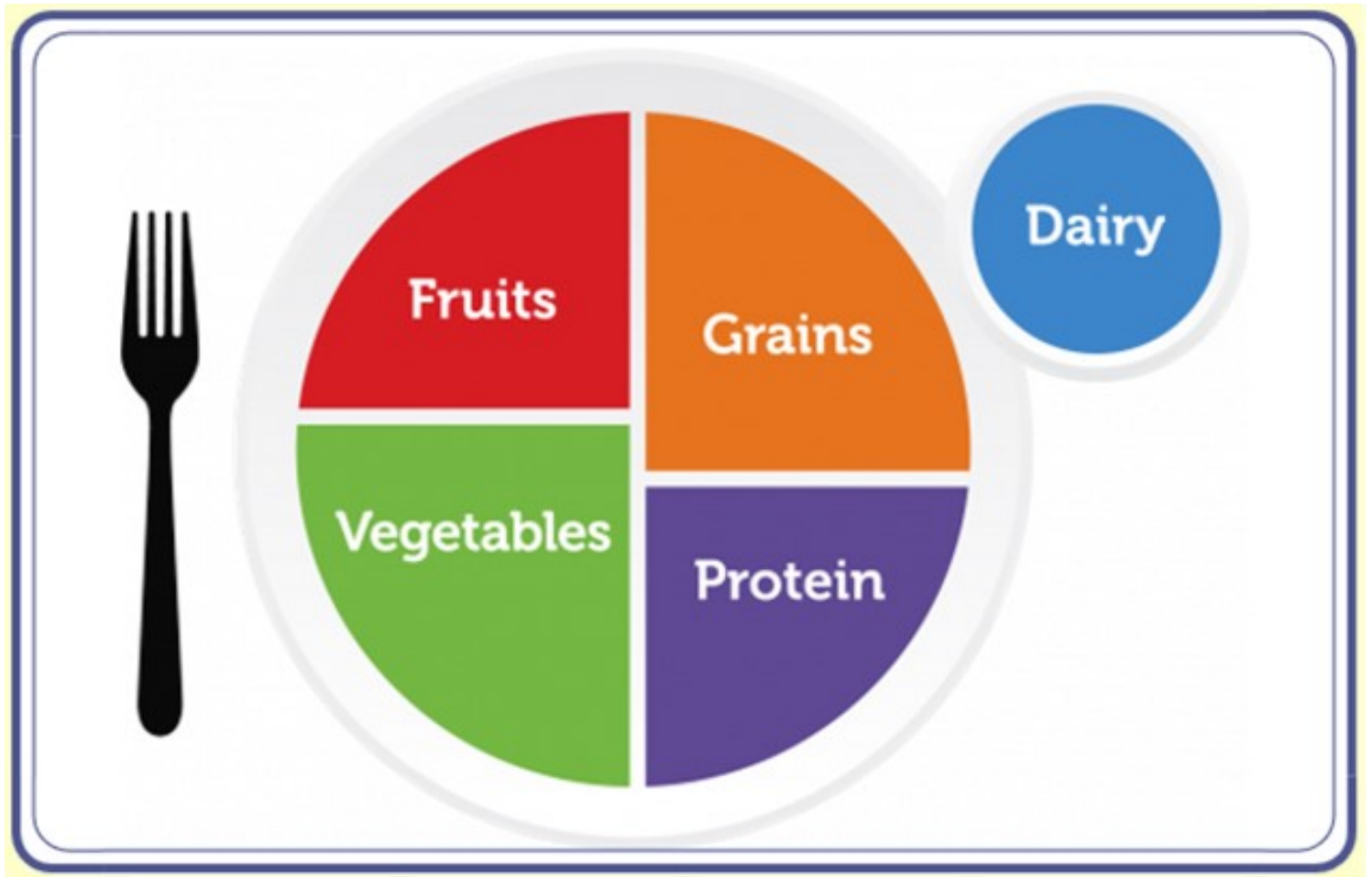
For additional recipes, check out the new "Cooking Around the World Cookbook" and other recipes available [here](#).

To learn more about National Nutrition Month, visit the [Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics website](#).



 Academy of Nutrition  
and Dietetics

# General MyPlate® Guidelines



## Fruits and Vegetables

Make about half your plate whole fruits and vegetables, and aim for different colors and variety.

Choose fruits that are whole, cut, or pureed. Fruits can be fresh, frozen, dried, or canned in 100% juice. Fruits can be part of a fast snack or a healthy dessert option.



Try adding fresh, frozen, or canned vegetables to salads, sides, and main dishes. Explore preparing your vegetables using different methods such as sautéing, roasting, grilling, or raw.

# General MyPlate® Guidelines



## Grains and Starches

Look for the word "whole" when choosing grains. Aim for foods with "whole grains" listed higher up on the ingredient list.

This group also includes starchy vegetables that are high in carbohydrates such as potatoes, yucca, plantains, corn, and pumpkin.



## Protein

Select a variety of animal- or plant-based proteins to fill up a quarter of your plate.

If you are choosing animal protein foods, try to choose leaner cuts of meat such as chicken breast or flank steak more often.

Some plant-based protein foods such as beans and lentils are also a source of fiber-rich carbohydrates.



## Dairy

Choose dairy or fortified dairy alternatives such as soy or almond milk.

One cup of milk, yogurt, or soy milk, or 1½ ounces of natural cheese is one serving of dairy.

Look for low-fat or non-fat dairy options to limit saturated fats from dairy.

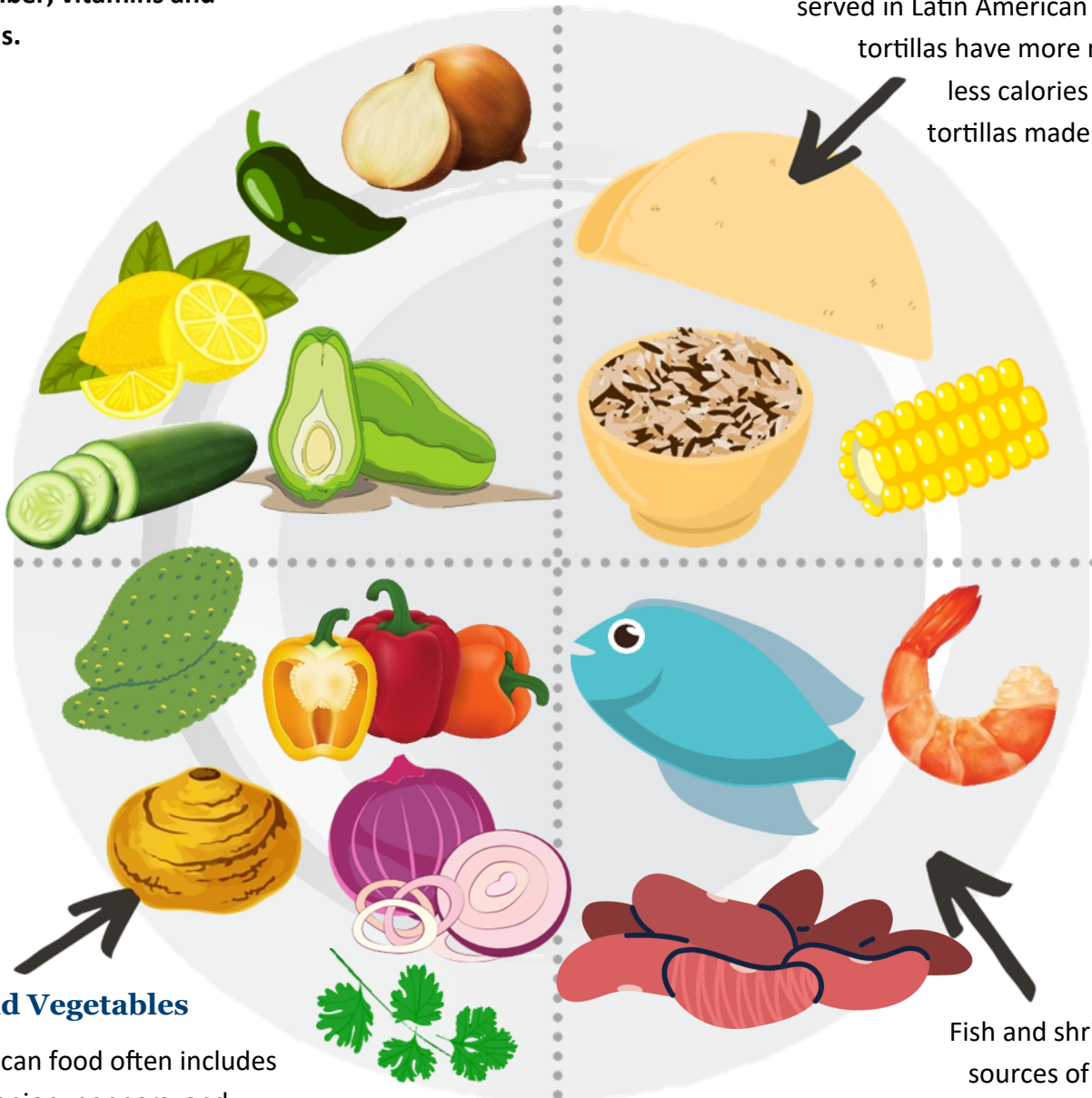
**MyPlate® serves as a general guide for balancing food groups and promoting healthy portion sizes, but your specific needs may be different based on your health conditions. A Registered Dietitian Nutritionist can help you with your food and nutrition-related goals. For more information visit [www.myplate.gov](http://www.myplate.gov).**

# Latin American Inspired MyPlate®

Chayote and jicama are common non-starchy vegetables in Latin American cuisine that are rich in fiber, vitamins and minerals.

## Grains and Starches

Tortillas, rice, and corn are often served in Latin American cuisine. Corn tortillas have more nutrients and less calories compared to tortillas made from refined wheat flour.



## Fruits and Vegetables

Latin American food often includes tomatoes, onion, peppers, and cilantro. Fruits include papaya, citrus, pineapple, and guava.

## Protein

Fish and shrimp are good sources of lean protein. Beans or lentils serve as great plant-based protein foods.

**Nopales (cactus) is a staple food in Latin American cuisine that is packed with nutrients, including fiber and calcium.**





# Calabacitas con Elote

Prep: 10 minutes | Cook: 15 minutes | Total: 25 minutes

Yield: 4 servings | Serving Size: 1 cup

## Ingredients

- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- 2 medium tomatoes, cut into 1-inch pieces (about 2 cups)
- ½ medium onion, diced (about ½ cup)
- 1 jalapeño, seeded and minced
- ¼ teaspoon salt
- 2 medium zucchini, trimmed, halved lengthwise and cut into 1-inch chunks (about 4 cups)
- 1 cup frozen corn
- 2 tablespoons chopped fresh cilantro
- ½ lime, juiced (about 1 tablespoon)

## Directions

1. Heat a large skillet or sauté pan over medium-high heat.
2. Add the oil and heat until shimmering.
3. Add the tomatoes, onion, jalapeño, and salt.
4. Cook, stirring often, until the tomatoes release their juice and the onion is softened, about 5-7 minutes.
5. Add the zucchini and corn.
6. Increase the heat to high and cook, stirring occasionally, until the zucchini is just starting to soften and the corn is thawed, about 6-8 minutes.
7. Add the cilantro and lime juice. Stir to combine.
8. Serve warm.

## Recipe Notes

- A little charring on the vegetables is okay and adds a nice flavor.
- If a crust forms on the bottom of the pan, use a rubber spatula to scrape it up and mix it into the vegetables. Adding the lime juice at the end will help to remove any that is still stuck on.

**Nutrition Facts Per Serving: Calories: 100 | Total Fat: 4.5 g | Saturated Fat: 0.5 g  
Sodium: 165 mg | Total Carbohydrate: 15.5 g | Dietary Fiber: 3.5 g | Protein: 3.5 g**

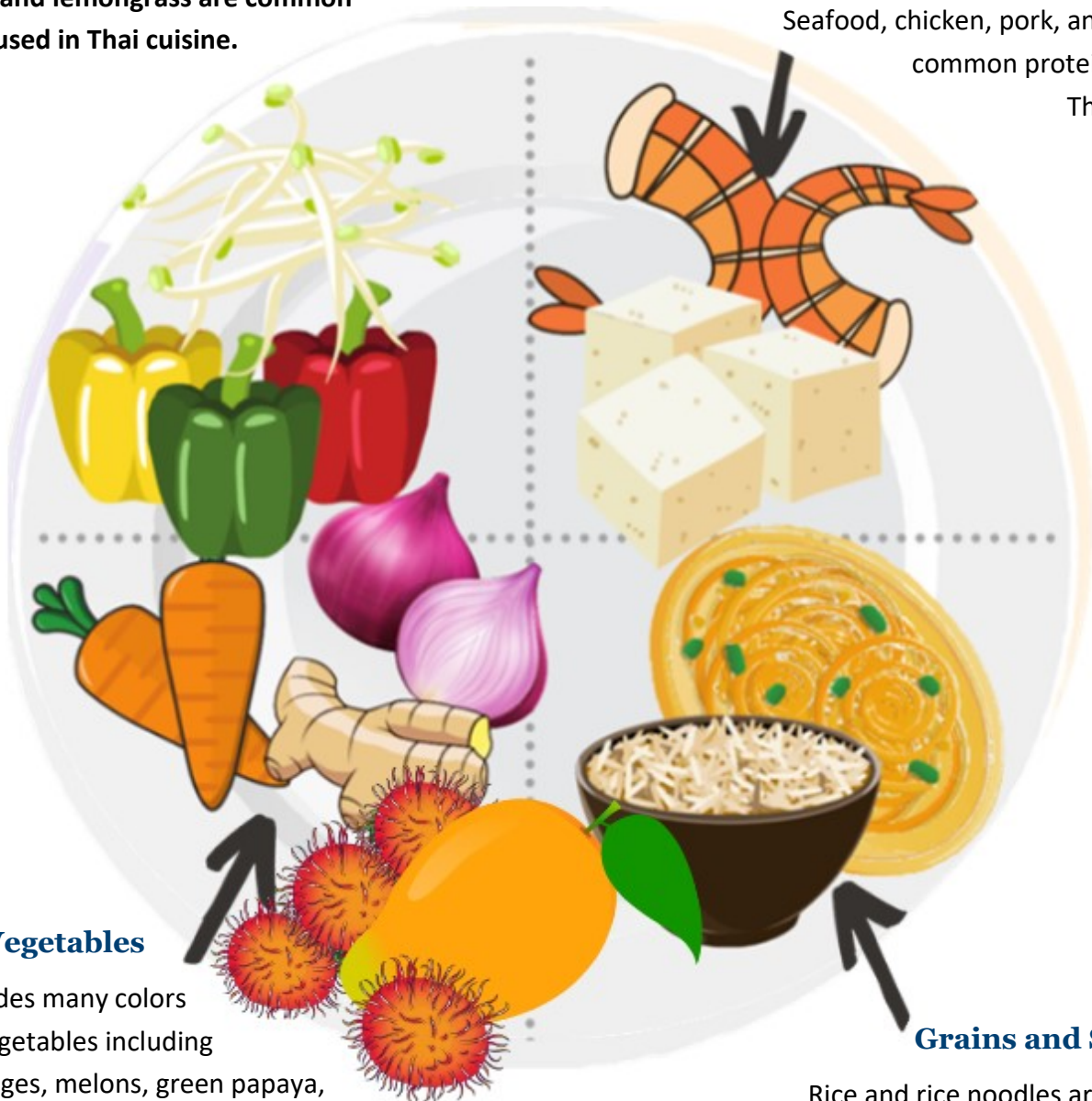
For more recipes, please visit [www.nutrition.va.gov](http://www.nutrition.va.gov)

# Thai Inspired MyPlate®

Thai food has four main flavors: sweet, sour, salty, and spicy. Spicy chilies, fermented sauces like fish sauce, ginger, coconut, kaffir lime leaves, and lemongrass are common ingredients used in Thai cuisine.

## Protein

Seafood, chicken, pork, and tofu are common protein foods in Thai cuisine.



## Fruits and Vegetables

Thai food includes many colors of fruits and vegetables including peppers, cabbages, melons, green papaya, long beans, eggplant, carrots, lettuce, mango, starfruit, and coconut.

## Grains and Starches

Rice and rice noodles are common starches in Thai cuisine. Rice is often served as a side or mixed in the dish. Get extra fiber by choosing whole-grain rice or noodles.

Bean sprouts are a popular topping for rice and noodles in Thai cuisine.





# Vegetable Thai Curry

Prep: 15 minutes | Cook: 30 minutes | Total: 45 minutes

Yield: 4 servings | Serving Size: 1½ cups

## Ingredients

- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- 1 medium onion, chopped (about 1 cup)
- 1 tablespoon grated fresh ginger (or 1 teaspoon ground dried ginger)
- 2-3 cloves garlic, minced (about 1½ teaspoons)
- 4 cups fresh or frozen vegetables, trimmed and cut into ½- to 1-inch pieces (one type or a combination; e.g. bell peppers, broccoli, carrots, mushrooms, green beans, cauliflower, zucchini)
- 2 tablespoons red curry paste
- 1 cup coconut milk (about half 13.5-ounce can)
- 2 cups low-sodium vegetable broth
- 2 teaspoons sugar
- 1 (16-ounce) block extra-firm tofu, cubed
- ½ lime, juiced (about 1 tablespoon juice)
- 2 cups cooked brown rice

## Directions

1. Heat a large pot or Dutch oven over medium heat.
2. Add the oil and heat until shimmering.
3. Add the onion and cook, stirring often, until softened, about 3-5 minutes.
4. Add the ginger and garlic and cook until fragrant, about 30-60 seconds, stirring constantly.
5. Add the selected vegetables and cook for 5 minutes, stirring occasionally.
6. Add the curry paste. Cook, stirring often, for 2 minutes.
7. Add the coconut milk, broth, and sugar. Stir to combine.
8. Gently fold in the tofu cubes and bring to a simmer over medium heat. Reduce the heat to medium-low to maintain a gentle simmer.
9. Cook until the vegetables have softened, about 5-10 minutes, depending on the vegetables used.
10. Remove from the heat and stir in the lime juice, then serve warm over the cooked brown rice.

## Recipe Notes

- Cooked chicken, fish, beef, or pork can be substituted for the tofu.

**Nutrition Facts Per Serving: Calories: 390 | Total Fat: 13 g | Saturated Fat: 3.5 g  
Sodium: 660 mg | Total Carbohydrate: 50 g | Dietary Fiber: 5 g | Protein: 15 g**

For more recipes, please visit [www.nutrition.va.gov](http://www.nutrition.va.gov)

# Eastern European Inspired MyPlate®

Beets are used in a soup made throughout Europe, as well as parts of northern Asia, called borscht.

## Fruits

Apples, berries, and apricots can bring flavor and color to your dish, or be used in a healthy dessert.

## Protein

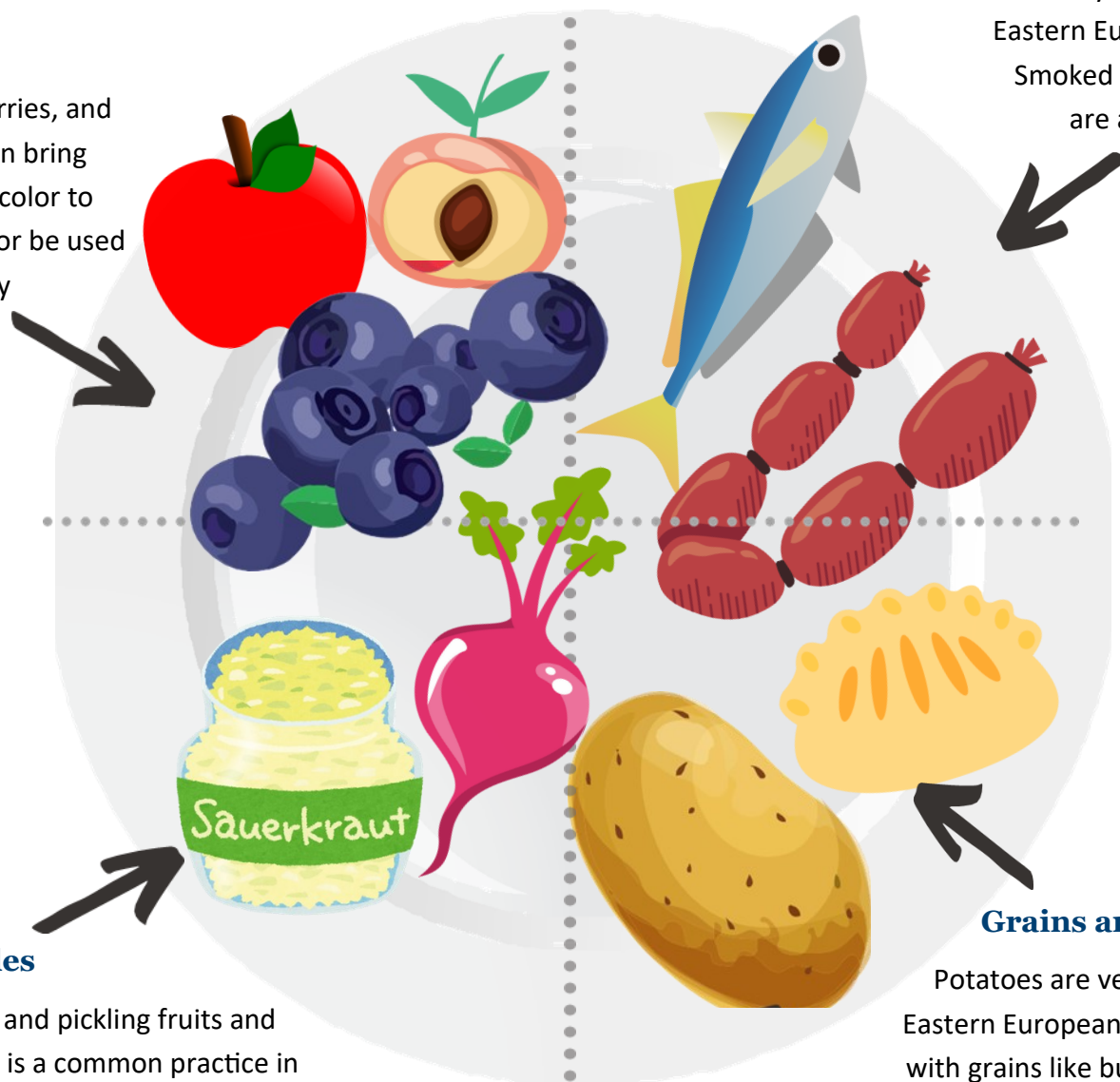
Eggs, pork, chicken, and beef are commonly used proteins in Eastern European cuisine. Smoked and pickled fish are also often used.

## Vegetables

Preserving and pickling fruits and vegetables is a common practice in Eastern European cuisine. Mushrooms, cucumbers, cauliflower, kohlrabi, and beets are vegetables often used.

## Grains and Starches

Potatoes are very common in Eastern European cuisine, along with grains like buckwheat, rye, millet, and barley. Dumplings are a common preparation for starches.



Sauerkraut is fermented cabbage that is used in many recipes or served as a side.



# Roasted Beet Borscht

Prep: 20 minutes | Cook: 40 minutes | Total: 1 hour

Yield: 8 servings | Serving Size: ~1 cup

## Ingredients

1 pound beets (about 2-3 medium beets), cut into 1-inch chunks  
½ teaspoon salt, divided  
½ teaspoon ground black pepper, divided  
3 tablespoons olive oil, divided  
2 large carrots, chopped (about 2 cups)  
1 medium onion, chopped (about 1 cup)  
2 cloves garlic, minced (about 1 teaspoon)  
½ teaspoon dried thyme  
6 cups (48 ounces) low-sodium vegetable broth  
2 tablespoons red wine vinegar  
1 tablespoon sugar or honey  
2 tablespoons chopped fresh dill (about ½ ounce)  
½ cup plain nonfat Greek yogurt  
1 medium tart-flavored apple (e.g. Granny Smith), cored and finely chopped (about 1 cup)

## Directions

1. Preheat the oven to 400°F.
2. On a baking sheet, toss the beets with 2 tablespoons of the oil, ¼ teaspoon of the salt, and ¼ teaspoon of the black pepper. Roast until tender, about 30-40 minutes.
3. Meanwhile, heat a large pot over medium heat. Add the remaining 1 tablespoon of oil and heat until shimmering.
4. Add the carrots, onion, the remaining ¼ teaspoon salt, and the remaining ¼ teaspoon black pepper. Cook, stirring occasionally, until beginning to soften, about 10 minutes.
5. Add the garlic and thyme. Cook until fragrant, about 1 minute.
6. Add the broth and bring to a boil over high heat, then reduce the heat to maintain a simmer.
7. Cook until the carrots are tender, about 15-20 minutes.
8. Transfer the beets to a blender, along with the carrots, onion, and enough broth to fill the blender about halfway.
9. Remove the plastic piece from the center of the blender lid and place a towel over the hole. Blend until smooth, about 2-3 minutes.
10. Return the pureed mixture to the pot and stir in the vinegar and sugar or honey. Reheat over the stovetop if needed.
11. In a small mixing bowl, stir together the yogurt and dill.
12. Serve warm or chill before serving, topping each serving with 1 tablespoon of the yogurt-dill mixture and 2 tablespoons of the chopped apple.

**Nutrition Facts Per Serving: Calories: 165 | Total Fat: 7.5 g | Saturated Fat: 1 g  
Sodium: 350 mg | Total Carbohydrate: 21.5 g | Dietary Fiber: 3.5 g | Protein: 6 g**

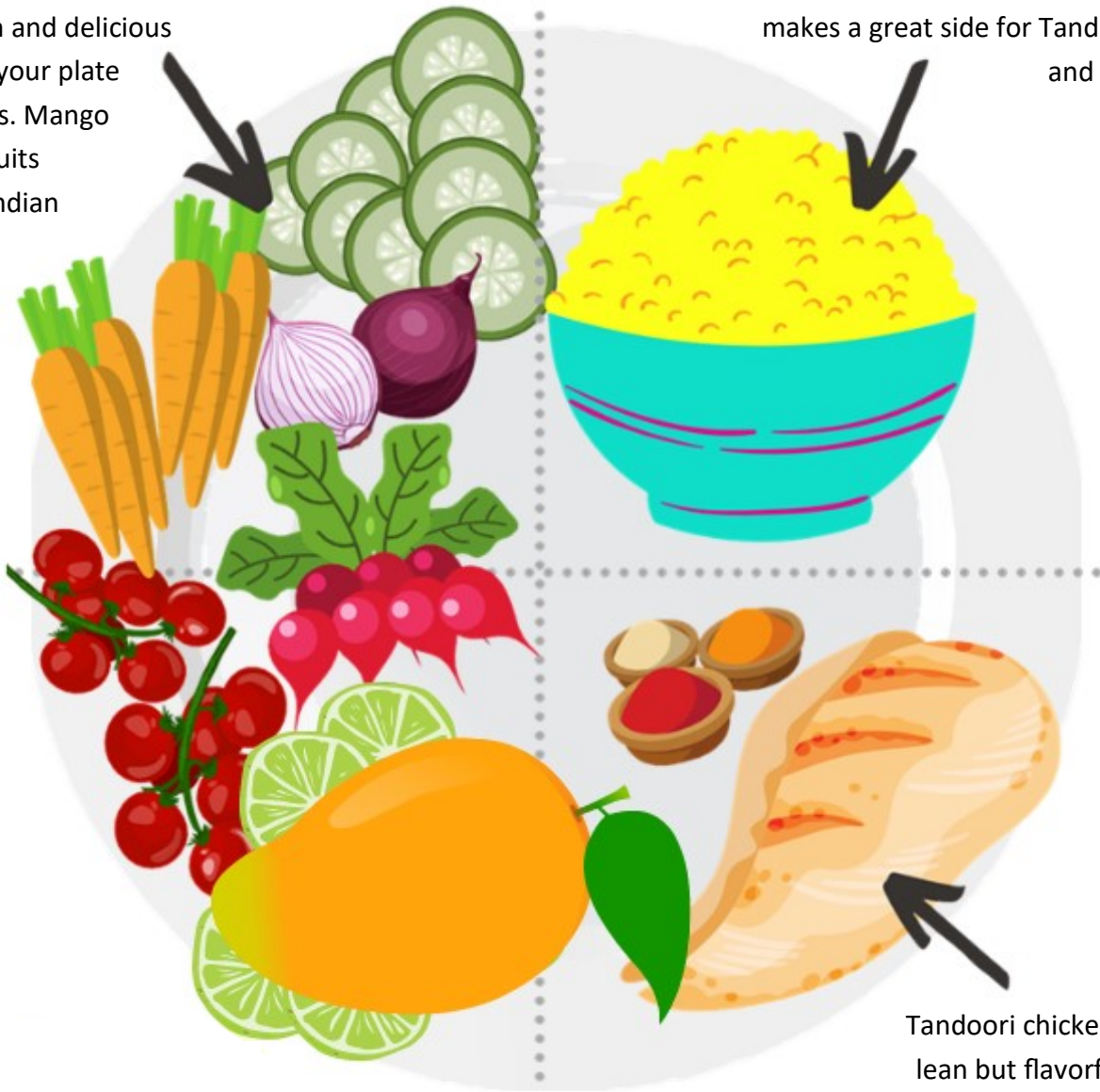
For more recipes, please visit [www.nutrition.va.gov](http://www.nutrition.va.gov)

# Indian Inspired MyPlate®

Try spiced stuffed eggplant, curried vegetables, pickles, or fruit chutney as a side!

## Fruits and Vegetables

Kachumber (Indian cucumber salad) is a fresh and delicious way to fill half your plate with vegetables. Mango and lime are fruits often used in Indian cuisine.



## Grains and Starches

Filling up a quarter of your plate with seasoned whole grain basmati rice makes a great side for Tandoori chicken and Kachumber.

## Protein

Tandoori chicken breast is a lean but flavorful source of protein. If you're looking for a plant-based protein source, red lentils or garbanzo beans are great budget-friendly options.

Browned clarified butter, also known as ghee, is a commonly used substitute for oil in Indian cuisine.

Herb and spice mixtures known as masalas are a foundation of Indian cuisine. Adding herbs and spices can be great way to pack in the flavor.



# Chicken Tikka Masala

Prep: 10 minutes | Cook: 20 minutes-4 hours | Total: 30 minutes-5 hours

Yield: 4 servings | Serving Size: 1 cup

## Ingredients

- 1 tablespoon canola oil
- 1 pound (16 ounces) boneless skinless chicken breast, cut into bite-sized pieces
- 1 tablespoon grated fresh ginger (or ½ teaspoon ground ginger)
- 2 cloves garlic, minced (about 1 teaspoon)
- 1 tablespoon garam masala
- ½ teaspoon paprika
- ½ teaspoon ground turmeric
- ¼ teaspoon salt
- 1 (15-ounce) can no-salt-added tomato sauce
- 1 cup lite coconut milk (about half of a 13.5-ounce can)

## Directions

**Stovetop:** Heat medium sized pot over medium high heat. Add 1 tablespoon oil. Once hot, add chicken and sauté for 5 minutes. Add ginger, garlic, spices and salt. Sauté for another 5 minutes. Add the tomato sauce. Cover and simmer for 20 minutes. Remove from heat and stir in the coconut milk or yogurt. Serve warm.

**Electric Pressure Cooker:** Set to sauté mode. Add oil. Once hot, add chicken. Sauté for 5 minutes. Add ginger, garlic, spices and salt. Sauté for another 5 minutes. Add tomato sauce and stir to combine. Set to manual pressure cook for 10 minutes, then quick release. Stir in coconut milk or yogurt. Serve warm.

**Slow Cooker/Crockpot:** Omit oil. Add chicken, ginger, garlic, spices, salt and tomato sauce to crockpot. Cook on high for 4 hours or low for 8 hours. Turn off, add coconut milk or yogurt. Stir to combine. Serve warm.

## Recipe Notes

- A (5- to 6-ounce) container of plain Greek yogurt can be used in place of the coconut milk.
- Serve over whole-grain rice or with naan bread and a fresh salad.

Nutrition Facts Per Serving: Calories: 255 | Total Fat: 10 g | Saturated Fat: 3 g  
Sodium: 300 mg | Total Carbohydrate: 9 g | Dietary Fiber: 2 g | Protein: 26 g

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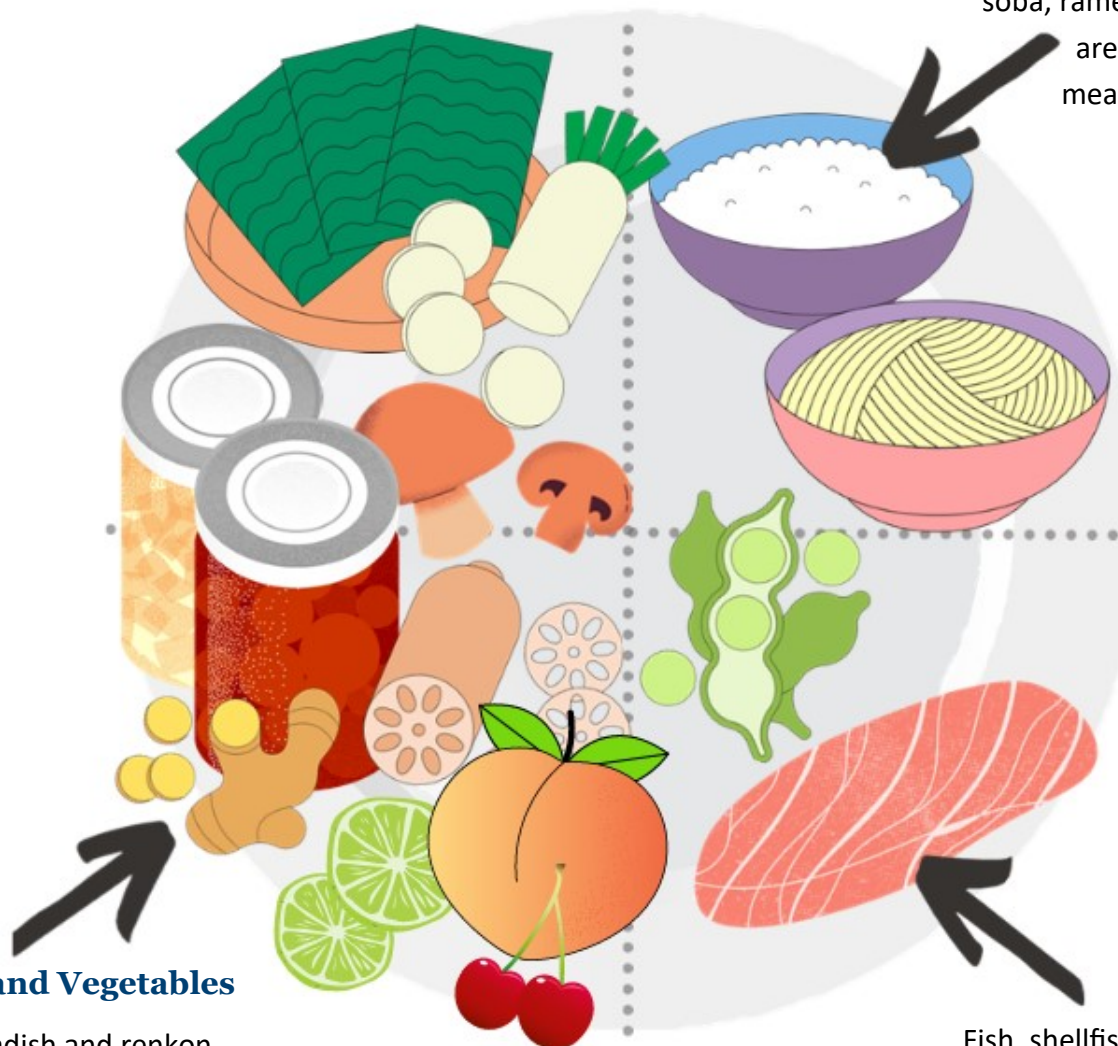


# Japanese Inspired MyPlate®

Seaweed, like nori or wakame, are a big part of the traditional Japanese diet. They are often eaten raw or dried.

## Grains and Starches

Steamed rice and noodles, such as soba, ramen, and udon noodles, are staple items for most meals in Japanese cuisine.



## Fruits and Vegetables

Daikon radish and renkon (lotus root) are common vegetables in Japanese cuisine. Fruits used include limes, cherries, and plums.

Japanese pickled fruits and vegetables, known as tsukemono, are a popular side dish. Pickled cucumbers, radishes, plums, and ginger are common. They are flavored with anything from miso to honey to matcha green tea.

## Protein

Fish, shellfish, and soy foods such as edamame and tofu are popular sources of protein in Japanese food.



# Sushi-Inspired Tuna Bowl

Prep: 15 minutes | Cook: 0 minutes | Total: 15 minutes

Yield: 1 serving | Serving Size: 1 bowl

## Ingredients

- ½ cup cooked white or brown rice, warm or cold
- 1 medium carrot, thinly sliced (about ½ cup)
- ¼ cup shelled edamame (mukimame), cooked and cooled
- ¼ cup thinly sliced cucumber
- 1 (2.6-ounce) pouch reduced-sodium chunk light tuna in water
- 3 small sheets dried seaweed (nori), crumbled
- 1 tablespoon rice vinegar
- 2 teaspoons reduced-sodium (lite) soy sauce
- 1 teaspoon toasted sesame oil
- 1 teaspoon honey
- 1 teaspoon fresh grated ginger (or ¼ teaspoon ground dried ginger)

## Directions

1. Add the cooked rice to a medium serving bowl or storage container.
2. Working in small piles around the inside of the bowl, add the carrot, edamame, cucumber, and tuna.
3. Sprinkle with the seaweed.
4. Add the vinegar, soy sauce, oil, honey and ginger to a small jar with a lid. Seal the jar. Shake to combine and make a sauce.
5. Drizzle the sauce mixture over the ingredients in the bowl.
6. Serve right away, or chill before serving if desired.

## Recipe Notes

- Consider doubling the recipe for leftovers or for more servings.
- Diced avocado is a nice addition to this bowl.

**Nutrition Facts Per Serving:** Calories: 430 | Total Fat: 7.5 g | Saturated Fat: 1 g  
Sodium: 610 mg | Total Carbohydrate: 44 g | Dietary Fiber: 4 g | Protein: 44 g

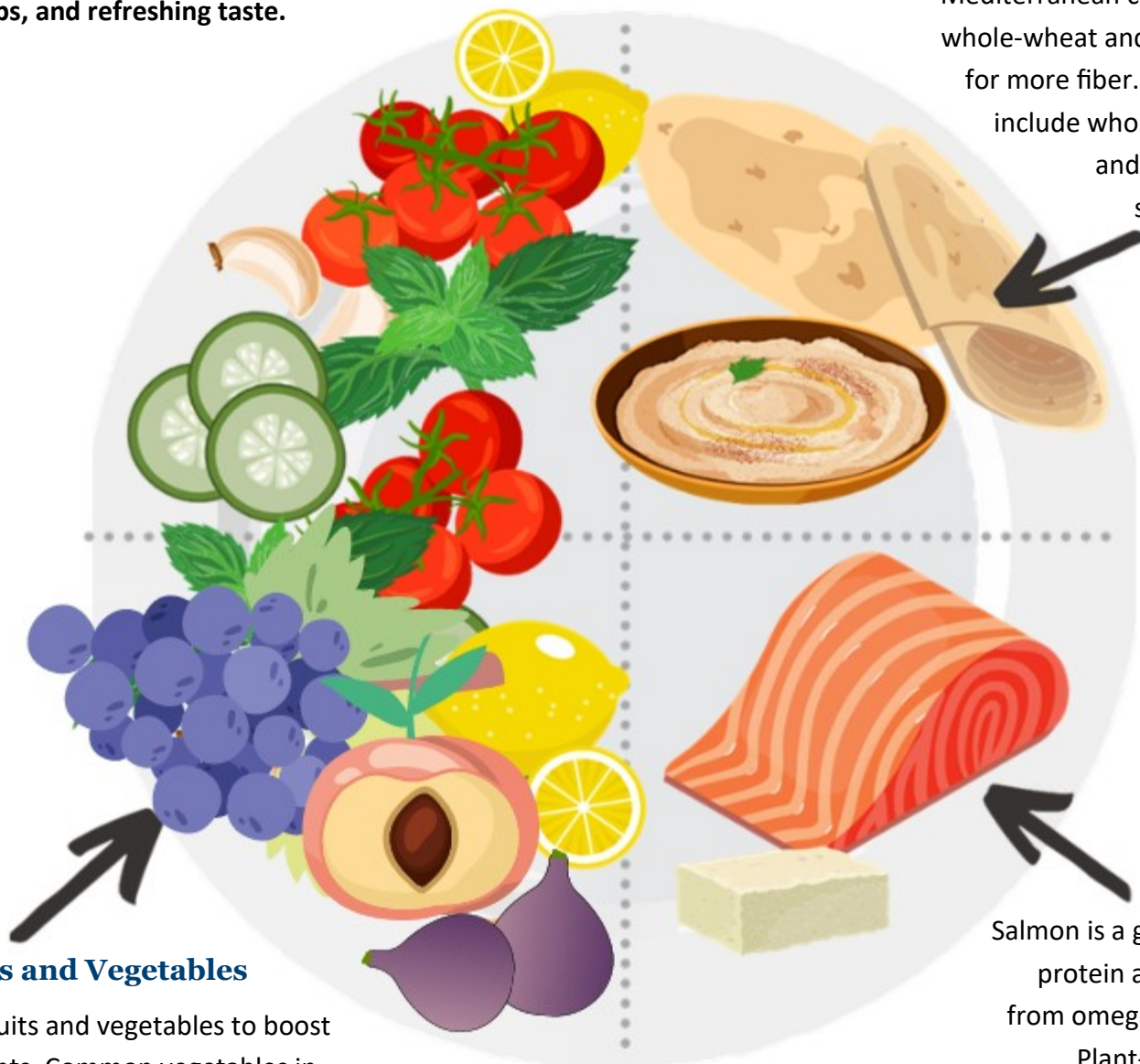
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# Mediterranean Inspired MyPlate®

Cucumber and tomato salad is a common side salad recipe in Mediterranean cuisine known for its unique blend of spices, herbs, and refreshing taste.

## Grains and Starches

Pita bread is often served in Mediterranean cuisine. Choose whole-wheat and add hummus for more fiber. Other options include whole-grain pastas and cooked grains such as bulgur.



## Fruits and Vegetables

Add fruits and vegetables to boost nutrients. Common vegetables in Mediterranean cuisine include peppers, carrots, eggplant, tomatoes, and leafy greens. Fruits include grapes, figs, and citrus.

Olives are a fruit with healthy fats, so they are nutritionally considered to be a fat source instead of fruit.

## Protein

Salmon is a great source of protein and healthy fat from omega-3 fatty acids. Plant-based protein options include falafel or garbanzo beans with feta cheese.





# Mediterranean Chickpea Salad

Prep: 15 minutes | Inactive: 10 minutes | Cook: 0 minutes | Total: 25 minutes

Yield: 4 servings | Serving Size: ~1 cup

## Ingredients

2 tablespoons lemon juice or red wine vinegar  
2 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil  
½ teaspoon dried oregano  
½ teaspoon crushed red pepper flakes  
½ medium onion, diced (about ½ cup)  
1-2 cloves garlic, minced (about 1 teaspoon)  
1 (15-ounce) cans no-salt-added chickpeas (garbanzo beans), drained and rinsed  
1 medium tomato, diced (about 1 cup)  
½ medium cucumber, unpeeled and diced (about ½ cup)  
½ medium bell pepper, diced (about ½ cup)

## Directions

1. In a large mixing bowl, whisk together the lemon juice or vinegar, oil, oregano, and red pepper flakes to make a dressing.
2. Add the onion and garlic. Stir to combine, then let sit for at least 10 minutes.
3. Add the chickpeas, tomatoes, cucumber, and bell pepper. Toss to combine.
4. Serve immediately, or chill before serving if desired.

## Recipe Notes

- Letting the onion and garlic sit in the acidic dressing in step 2 helps to cut down their harsh pungent flavors.
- You can save some time by prepping the tomatoes, cucumber, and bell pepper while the onion and garlic sit with the dressing.
- Cut the remaining cucumber and bell pepper into slices and enjoy as a snack, if desired.

**Nutrition Facts Per Serving:** Calories: 145 | Total Fat: 8.5 g | Saturated Fat: 1 g  
Sodium: 10 mg | Total Carbohydrate: 15 g | Dietary Fiber: 3 g | Protein: 4.5 g

For more recipes, please visit [www.nutrition.va.gov](http://www.nutrition.va.gov)



# Cultural Crossword Puzzle

## Across

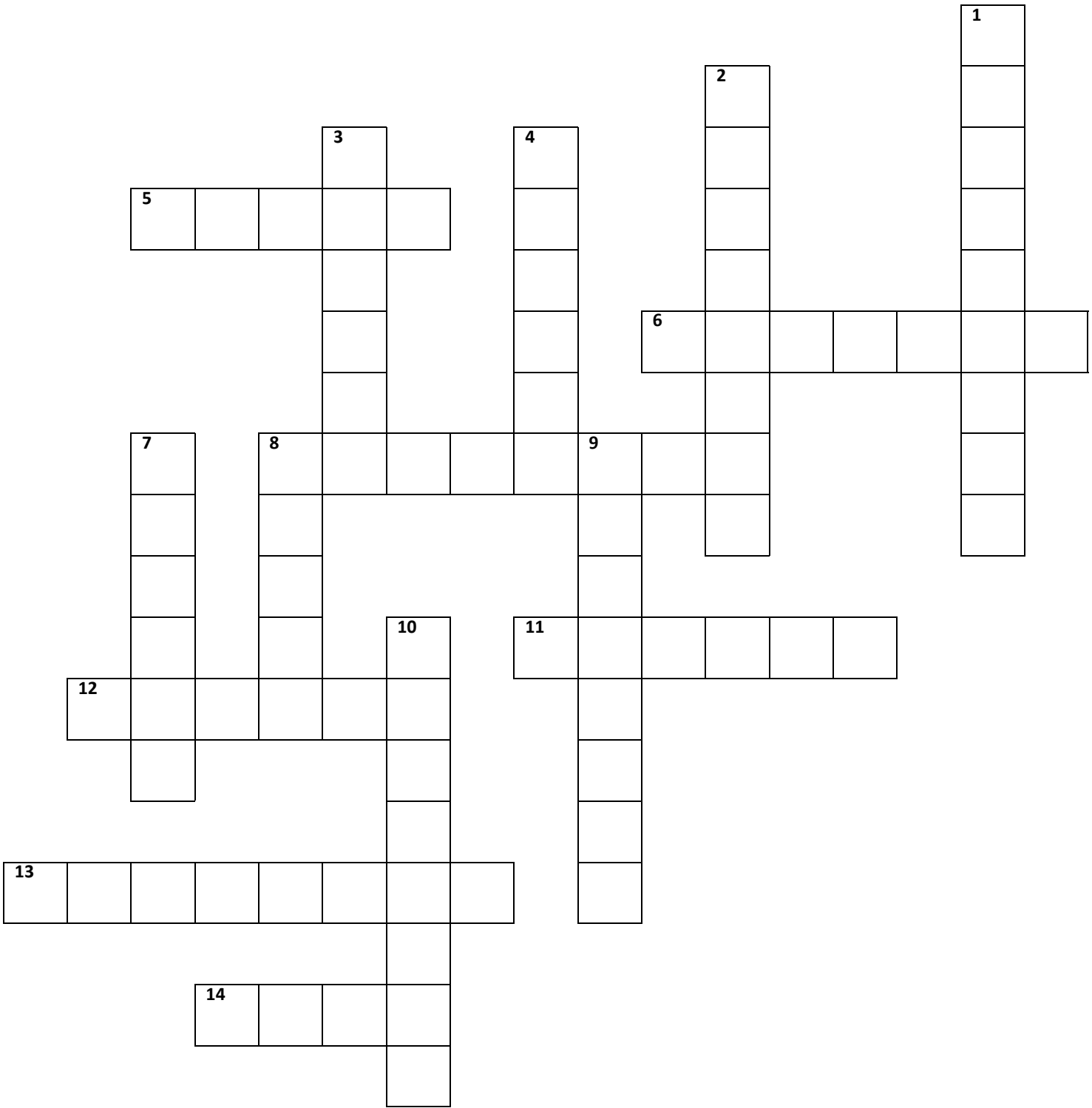
5. This herb is popular among the Mediterranean countries and is usually added to pizza, soups, and marinades with olive oil and garlic.
6. This extremely expensive spice comes from a flower called *Crocus Sativus* and turns food a bright yellow color.
8. This herb is used in Mexican salsa dishes and comes from the leaves of the coriander plant.
11. This spicy green condiment is often paired with sushi.
12. This plant-based protein and whole grain comes in a variety of colors and is often used as a substitute for rice.
13. This spice is used in many Mexican dishes such as mole sauce.
14. This tropical fruit is native to many parts of Asia and takes the shape of its name; it is also called Carambola.

## Down

1. China is one of the leading producers of these fungi which are high in Vitamin D.
2. This popular green herb used in French cuisine can have a pungent smell and some say it has a hint of licorice taste.
3. This Korean staple is a side dish that contains fermented vegetables like cabbage and radishes.
4. This Central American tropical fruit with prickly bright red skin is also known as pitaya or strawberry pear.
7. This Middle Eastern dip is made with chickpeas and is usually served with pita bread.
8. Some common Thai cuisine seasonings consist of ginger, cloves, chili powder, and this spice which is a member of the parsley family.
9. Spain is one country known for gazpacho, a blended vegetable soup made mostly from these.
10. This popular Indian chicken dish is marinated in yogurt and seasoned with spices like cayenne or red chili pepper.



# Cultural Crossword Puzzle



**Answers:**

**Across** 5) Basil 6) Saffron 8) Cilantro 11) Wasabi 12) Quinoa 13) Cinnamon 14) Star  
**Down** 1) Mushrooms 2) Tarragon 3) Kimchi 4) Dragon 7) Hummus 8) Cumin 9) Tomatoes 10) Tandoori



# World of Flavors Trivia

The foods we eat and the ways we cook them are part of our food culture. Across the globe, people have unique food cultures.

Test your knowledge on foods and dishes eaten throughout the world.

1. New Orleans is famous for a dish that incorporates French, Spanish, and Caribbean influences. What is this dish called?
2. Pasta is one of Italy's national dishes. How many different types of pasta are there?
3. What Asian fruit is sometimes known as the "king of fruit" and has a very strong smell?
4. Which country consumes the most coffee?
5. The Netherlands is famous for which Dutch cow's cheese?
6. The dish, Goulash, belongs to which country?
7. Borscht is a popular soup in Eastern Europe. What vegetable is it made from?
8. What country do tacos come from?
9. A Chinese gooseberry is more commonly known as what?
10. What two foods are considered national dishes of Peru?

## Answers:

1) Jambalaya 2) Over 350 3) Durian 4) The Netherlands 5) Gouda 6) Hungary 7) Beets/ Beetroot 8) Mexico 9) Kiwi fruit 10) Ceviche and Cuy



# Adding Flavor with Spices

Spices typically come from the berries, seeds, roots, or bark of plants. When dried for packaging and cooking, their flavors intensify. Spices can be purchased whole or ground.

## Using Whole Spices

Buying spices whole and then grinding them as needed keeps them fresher for longer, up to 2 years. Examples of whole spices are cardamom pods, whole cloves, cumin seeds, and peppercorns.

If using whole spices in a dish, make sure to remove and discard them before serving. Placing the whole spices in a sachet or a little pouch made from cheesecloth can make this process easier.

To grind spices from their whole form:

1. Place the whole spices in a coffee grinder (reserve this grinder for spices only).
2. Pulse the spices in the grinder until they are finely ground.
3. Sift the ground spices to remove any large or hard bits.
4. Use right away or store in an airtight container in a cool, dark place for up to 1 year.
5. (Optional) To fully clean the grinder between spices, place torn up pieces of bread in the grinder. Pulse to move the bread around in the grinder, which will allow it to pick up any leftover spice residue. Remove and discard the bread, or toast it to make breadcrumbs. (Note: If you cannot have bread for any reason, rice can be used to clean the grinder instead.)
6. Wipe out the grinder with a damp cloth and wipe it dry. Put it away or use it for another spice.

## Toasting Spices

If using whole spices, they can be toasted in a dry skillet to bring out their flavors before grinding them.

## Blooming Spices

Many of the flavors in spices can only come out when they are combined with a fat. Blooming spices is a technique that involves cooking whole or ground spices in a little oil over medium-low heat to bring out their best flavor.

If cooking aromatic vegetables, such as onions and garlic, the spices can be added at the same time.

## Common Spices and How to Use Them

Spice	Description	Suggested Uses
Allspice	Small brown berry, flavor resembles a combination cinnamon, clove, and nutmeg.	Sausages, braised meats, poached fish, cooked fruits, winter squash, beans, puddings, pies, and relishes.
Anise	Licorice flavor.	Cookies, pastries, and bread.
Caraway	Dark brown curved seed.	Rye bread, cabbage, sauerkraut, and Eastern European Cuisine.
Cardamom	Tiny brown seeds, white or green pods. Sweet and aromatic.	Pickling, Danish pastries, and curries.
Cayenne	Very powerful, ground hot red pepper.	Soups, sauces, fish and other seafood, and eggs.
Celery Seed	Tiny brown seed with strong celery flavor. Too much can create a "hot" spice effect.	Salads, dressings, pickling, tomato dishes, and marinades.
Chili Powder	Blend of ground cumin, chili pepper, oregano, allspice. Can be mild or hot.	Chili, stews, sauces, and ground meats.
Cinnamon	Reddish brown aromatic bark from the cinnamon or cassia tree.	Preserves, stewed fruits, applesauce, oatmeal, breads, pastries, desserts, ham, and hot beverages.
Clove	Dried flower bud of the tropical clove tree. Pungent, sweet in flavor.	Marinades, stocks, sauces, braised meats, hams, pickling, fruits and cakes.
Coriander	Round light-brown seed of cilantro leaf with a slightly aromatic flavor.	Pickling, sausages, chili, beans, stocks, pork, curry, gingerbread, salsa, and dressings.
Cumin	Small seed resembling caraway, but lighter in color.	Sausages, salsa, egg dishes, hummus, curry dishes, vegetables, soups, sauces, fish, meat, and rice.
Curry	Mixture of up to 20 spices including turmeric, cumin, coriander, ginger, clove, and cinnamon. Peppery, yellow in color. Can be mild to very hot.	Curry dishes, vegetables, potatoes or sweet potatoes, soups, sauces, fish, meat, and rice.
Dill (seed)	Seed with "dill pickle" flavor. The seed is more pungent than the herb.	Pickling, soups, sauerkraut, marinade.
Fennel	Greenish brown seed, similar in flavor to anise.	Béarnaise sauce, vinegar, chicken, fish, salads, dressings, and eggs.
Garlic	Strong aromatic member of onion family.	Widely used.

## Common Spices and How to Use Them (continued)

Spice	Description	Suggested Uses
Ginger	Light brown knobby root from a tropical plant.	Baked goods, desserts, fruits, curry dishes, sweet potatoes, cooked carrots, winter squash, pickling, and chutney. Chinese, Caribbean, and Japanese cuisine.
Juniper Berry	Slightly soft, purple berry. "Piney" flavor.	Marinades, game dishes, and sauerkraut.
Mace	Made from the orange-red outer covering of nutmeg. Aromatic, similar to nutmeg in flavor but milder.	Baked goods, desserts, fruit, sausages, fish, vegetables, and preserves.
Mustard Seed	Very pungent white, yellow or brown seed.	Prepared mustard, pickling, sauces, and salsa.
Nutmeg	Sweet, aromatic kernels of nutmeg fruit.	Baked goods, pies, quiche, sautéed spinach, cream sauces, soups, chicken, veal, vegetables, desserts, and breads.
Paprika	Ground from dried sweet, red pepper. Look for "smoked paprika," which has a pungent smoky, sometimes hot, flavor.	Fish, seafood, meats, salads, sauces, dressings, and garnish.
Pepper	<p>Small hard berry.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Black: Pungent, aromatic.</li> <li>White: What is left when black outer casing is removed. Milder, with a sharp tang.</li> <li>Green: Mild, packed in mild brine.</li> <li>Pink: Sharp, fruity, somewhat sweet.</li> </ul>	Widely used in most cuisines
Poppy Seeds	Tiny blue black seeds with crunchy nut like flavor. It is a product of the opium poppy, but does not contain opium.	Breads, rolls, pastry, fillings, cookies, cakes, salsa, and dressings.
Saffron	Only the stigmas from the saffron crocus are used. Very expensive. Gives bright yellow color to foods with a mild distinctive flavor.	Baked goods, rice, potatoes, soups, sauces, curry, and meats.
Sesame	Small yellowish seed with high oil content and nutty taste.	Garnish for baked goods (e.g. breads, rolls), salads, and oriental candy.
Turmeric	Intense yellow root of ginger family. Mild but peppery flavor.	Curry powder, pickles, relish, salads, eggs, rice, and chow-chow.





## Adding Flavor with Herbs

Adding herbs to the dishes you make is an excellent way to bring in a new world of flavor without adding extra salt. Herbs come in a variety of forms and varieties, and can be used to bring out the best in many types of recipes.

The most common forms of herbs available are fresh and dried. Fresh herbs can be used to bring in a bright or hearty flavor, depending on the variety used. Dried herbs lend deep, complex flavors to dishes and are certainly more convenient to use than fresh herbs.

### Substituting Dried Herbs for Fresh Herbs

It is important to keep in mind that dried herbs do best in recipes with long cooking times (20 minutes or more). Dried herbs will not work in dishes that must use herbs raw (e.g. pesto) or when needed to finish a dish.

- 1 part whole dried herbs = 3 parts fresh herbs (example: use 1 teaspoon dried whole herb in place of 1 tablespoon fresh herb)
- 1 part ground/rubbed dried herbs = 4 parts fresh herbs (example: use ¼ teaspoon dried ground or rubbed herb in place of 1 teaspoon fresh herb)

### Hardy Herbs (e.g. Rosemary, Oregano, Thyme, Sage, Marjoram)

Some herbs have a hardy, almost woody texture. The leaves are sturdy and the stems can be tough. They are potent and only a small amount of these herbs is needed to flavor a dish (usually fractions of teaspoons to a tablespoon). Dried versions of these herbs work well in cooking.

These herbs benefit from long cooking to release maximum flavor and ensure that their texture is not unpleasant. Add these herbs at the beginning of cooking.

### Delicate Herbs (e.g. Basil, Cilantro, Dill, Chives, Mint, Parsley, Tarragon)

Other herbs have a delicate, leafy texture. The stems are tender, and can even be edible. Delicate herbs are prone to wilting and discoloration, and their flavor tends to quickly disappear when cooked. They tend to have a mild flavor so a larger amount is often needed to flavor a dish (usually tablespoons to fractions of a cup).

These herbs are best used to finish dishes or used raw in sauces. Add these herbs at the end of cooking, or use as a garnish.

## How to Preserve Fresh Herbs

Sometimes we might harvest or purchase more fresh herbs than we can use right away. Rather than let them go to waste, here are three ways to save your fresh herbs for later:

**Air Drying:** Works best for hardy herbs.

1. Shake the fresh herbs to remove any dirt. You can gently wash the herbs, but be sure to dry them well afterward to prevent mold growth.
2. Secure the herb stems together using twine or a rubber band.
3. Hang the herbs upside down in a warm, dry, well-ventilated place away from sunlight. If you don't have a dark spot, or if dust is a concern, cover the bundle loosely with a paper bag.
4. Leave the herbs to dry until the leaves crumble, anywhere from 1-4 weeks. Store in an airtight container for up to 1 year.

**Freezing:** The best option for both delicate herbs and hardy fresh herbs.

- **Method A**

1. Wash and dry the fresh herbs.
2. Chop the fresh herbs.
3. Pack the chopped herbs into an ice cube tray.
4. Top the herbs off with oil, broth, or water. Oil is best for preventing freezer burn.
5. Freeze the herbs, then pop out the cubes.
6. Store the frozen herb cubes in an airtight container in the freezer for up to 3 months.

- **Method B**

1. Wash and dry the fresh herbs.
2. Blend the fresh herbs into a paste with a little oil, broth, or water. Oil is best for preventing freezer burn.
3. Pack the herb paste into an ice cube tray.
4. Freeze the herb paste, then pop out the cubes.
5. Store the frozen herb paste cubes in an airtight container in the freezer for up to 3 months.



## Common Herbs and How to Use Them

Herb	Description	Suggested Uses
Basil	Aromatic green leaf. Member of the mint family.	Tomato dishes, pesto, egg dishes, salads, marinades, fish, and compound butters.
Bay Leaf	Stiff dark green, oblong leaf with a pungent aroma similar to sassafras.	Stocks, sauces, soup, stews, and braised meats.
Chervil	Small, delicate, green leaf. Mild flavor of parsley and tarragon.	Soups, salads, sauces, egg, dishes, chicken, fish, and dressing.
Chives	Fine, hollow, green top of a very small onion.	Salads, egg and cheese dishes, fish soups, and sauces.
Cilantro	Light green aromatic leaf. Shaped like flat parsley, but much more pungent flavor.	Salads, salsa, sauces, soup, eggs, and dressings.
Dill (herb)	Herb with "dill pickle" flavor.	Salads, soups, fish & shellfish, vegetables, sauces, and potatoes.
Marjoram	Gray green herb from mint family. Similar to oregano, but milder.	Beef, veal, lamb, sausage, pates, poultry, stews, soups, vegetables, salads, and sauces.
Mint	Aromatic herb with cool flavor. Spearmint and peppermint are most common.	Lamb, fruits, tea, fruit beverages, peas, carrots, potatoes, jellies, soups, and sauces.
Oregano	Pungent herb. Similar to marjoram, but stronger.	Italian and Mexican dishes, tomato sauces, soups, sauces, stews, meats, salads, and marinades.
Parsley	Green leaf, curly or flat, with a delicate sweet flavor. An excellent source of vitamin C.	Garnish, fries, stews, sauces, salads, vegetables, and potatoes.
Rosemary	Very aromatic light green leaf resembling pine needles. Plant stays healthy and strong, even in cold or very hot weather.	Lamb, fish, beef, sauces, soups, stews, salads, and marinades.
Sage	Pungent gray green herb with fuzzy oblong leaves.	Stuffing, meat, poultry, soups, stews, salads, and fish.
Savory	Fragrant herb of the mint family.	Salads, eggs, vegetables, stuffing, soups, meats, fish, and sauces.
Tarragon	Delicate green herb with small oblong leaves. Flavor is similar to mint and licorice.	Béarnaise sauce, vinegar, chicken, fish, salads, dressings, and eggs.
Thyme	Tiny brownish green leaf, very aromatic.	Soups, chowders, stocks, sauces, meats, poultry, and salad dressing.





## Closing

Thank you for reading this National Nutrition Month® 2022 Activity Booklet. We hope that you have learned some valuable information about how to personalize your plate through different cultures.

Filling a quarter of your plate with protein foods, a quarter with grains and starches, and half with fruits and vegetables is a great step towards balanced nutrition. For more in-depth nutrition guidance, consider scheduling an appointment with an outpatient Registered Dietitian Nutritionist (RDN) at your VA facility.

Thank you to VA San Diego's class of 2021 Dietetic Interns – Angel Estrella, Cameron Vinoskey, Harry Rehm, Isaac Schiff, Tatum Vedder, and Sarah Choi – for creating the original version of this activity booklet for 2021 National Nutrition Month® – Personalize Your Plate, and thank you for giving permission to continue adapting and sharing the activity booklet in years to come.

The National Nutrition Month® 2022 Activity Booklet adaptations made by the Marketing and Nutrition Informatics National Nutrition Month® workgroup: Beth Blair, RDN; Hillary Markey, RDN; Erin Gobeille, MS, RDN; Yaqutullah Ibraheem Muhammad, MS, RDN; Brenda Greer, RDN; Sara Peidle, MS, RDN; Janice Anglin, MS, RDN; and Bethany Dawson, RDN.



 Academy of Nutrition  
and Dietetics



# Healthy Teaching Kitchen Tools and Resources

The VA Healthy Teaching Kitchen (HTK) program offers a variety of online tools and resources to support you with healthy cooking.

## VA Recipes and Cookbooks

Visit: [www.nutrition.va.gov/Recipes.asp](http://www.nutrition.va.gov/Recipes.asp)

- Recipes in various categories (e.g. main dishes, sides, beverages, snacks) with new recipes added on a regular basis
- Cookbooks on various topics, including: One-Pot Meals, Healthy Cooking at Home, Garden to Table, and Cooking with Ease

## Recipe and Cooking Demonstration Videos

- **HTK YouTube Channel** – Visit: [Healthy Teaching Kitchen - YouTube](https://www.youtube.com/HealthyTeachingKitchen)
- **Chicago VA Facebook Live Healthy Teaching Kitchen** – Visit: [www.facebook.com/VACHicago](https://www.facebook.com/VACHicago)
  - \* 2nd Thursday of the month at 11:00am-12:00pm EST
  - \* Videos are saved on the Facebook page after the Live event for future viewing

## Recipes and Other Healthy Cooking Tips

- **MyPlate® Kitchen** – For recipes, videos, and healthy eating tips. Visit: [www.choosemyplate.gov/myplatekitchen](http://www.choosemyplate.gov/myplatekitchen)
- **Fruits and Veggies More Matters** – Meal planning resources and recipes, with an emphasis on fruits and vegetables. Visit: [www.fruitsandveggies.org](http://www.fruitsandveggies.org)
- **Additional Recipes and Nutrition Information** – Visit the [Team Nutrition Recipes](https://www.teamnutrition.com/recipes) and [MyPlate®](https://www.choosemyplate.gov/myplatekitchen) websites
- If you need meal ideas, try using an Internet search tool. For example, if you have chicken and broccoli, search “Easy Healthy Chicken Broccoli recipe”.

Many VA facilities offer in-person Healthy Teaching Kitchen classes. To learn about local options, contact the nutrition department at your facility.

