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Struggling to get your daily dose of veggies? Tap into the power of soup this winter

Plant-based diets are one of the biggest health trends this year¹, but despite this most Australians struggle to meet their daily vegetable quota. The answer, according to dietitians, could be as simple as a humble bowl of soup.

Dietitians Association of Australia spokesperson Nicole Dynan said soups are the perfect way to pack in more vegetables, which can improve how we feel, help ward off winter lurgies and safe guard our health over time.

“This winter, switch the spotlight away from what not to eat, and instead think about how to get more goodness into your day,” said Ms Dynan, an Accredited Practising Dietitian.

She said soups are an easy way to embrace winter vegetables, like spinach, kale, cauliflower, carrots, pumpkin, Brussels sprouts and beetroot, and also fibre-rich legumes, which count towards your vegetable intake.

“What’s better in winter than a warm bowl of soup? It’s a true comfort food – a simple, low-cost and tasty meal that can easily feed a crowd, makes a perfect lunch at work and freezes well,” said Ms Dynan.

She recommends experimenting with new soup flavours or ingredients, while always keeping vegetables front and centre.

“Think laksa soup with Asian greens, noodles and light coconut milk, or carrot and lentil soup topped with natural yoghurt and a squeeze of lemon juice, or minestrone, a family favourite combining vegetables, legumes and pasta,” said Ms Dynan.

Accredited Practising Dietitian Natasha Murray makes nourishing winter soups a staple in her household.

“Potato and leek is a classic combination that works so well. My 10-year-old daughter loves the lighter taste and will happily take it to school for lunch. And for the adults, I add some cracked pepper for a bit of extra punch,” said Ms Murray.

Lisa Donaldson, a Canberra-based dietitian, suggests soups featuring Jerusalem artichokes, which are in season over the cooler months.

“Do not be intimidated by the appearance of the artichoke! If you can steam and peel, you'll have no problem. I love making chicken soup with artichokes, sliced lemon, capers, garlic, thyme and olives. These bold flavours really lift the classic chicken soup to the next level,” said Ms Donaldson.

To celebrate their love of nourishing foods and to mark the start of winter, Accredited Practising Dietitians will share their favourite soups on Instagram this June (@dietitians_association_au and #LoveSoup).

Top tips for nourishing soups:

- Make a soup with all the leftover vegetables in your fridge and add any spare canned legumes (such as cannellini beans, chickpeas or kidney beans) from the cupboard.
- Substitute wholegrain ingredients, such as wholemeal pasta, buckwheat noodles or brown rice, over more refined options, for a fibre boost.
- Use homemade stock or broth (from cooking vegetables or meaty bones) as a base, but if this is not possible, opt for salt-reduced store-bought stock.
- Top soups with fresh herbs, like basil, dill or parsley, or add roasted garlic or spices for a flavour twist, or roasted nuts and seeds for crunch.

Access nutrition tips and wholesome soup recipes at ‘Smart Eating for a Healthier You’ at daa.asn.au.

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For further information or to organise an interview with Nicole Dynan, contact Felicity Curtain, Dietitians Association of Australia, on 0409 661 920.

Nicole Dynan’s Vegan Tortilla Soup

Serves 6

Ingredients

- 3 soft fajitas/tortillas
- Olive oil spray
- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- 1 onion, chopped
- 2 cloves garlic, crushed
- 1 tablespoon chilli powder
- 2 cups washed + chopped kale (remove stems)
- 1 red capsicum, chopped (remove stem and seeds)
- 4 cups low-sodium vegetable stock
- 2 cans diced tomatoes, not drained

Toppings:

- 1 can black beans, rinsed and drained (or dry black beans soaked overnight)
- 1 avocado, sliced into wedges
- 1 cup fresh coriander
- 1 lime, sliced into 6 wedges

Directions

1. Preheat oven to 190°C.
2. Spray both sides of the tortillas with oil spray and slice into thin strips.
3. Place on a baking tray lined with baking paper and bake for 8-12 minutes, until crisp. Set aside.
4. In a large saucepan, heat olive oil, onions, garlic and chilli powder for 2 minutes. Add kale and capsicum and cook until soft (about 5 minutes).
5. Add stock and tomatoes and bring to a boil.
6. Carefully puree hot soup with a stick blender until smooth.
7. When serving, top each bowl with: 6 baked tortilla strips, 1-2 tablespoons black beans, 1 avocado wedge, 1 tablespoon coriander and a squeeze of lime.

Tips:

- For an extra spicy kick, add a fresh chilli of your choice at step 4
- Chilli powder can be replaced with 1 tablespoon of cumin and 1 teaspoon paprika if too hot for the kids.
- Replace 2 cups of stock with 2 cups of water for a lower sodium soup

Recipe image available on request by contacting media@daa.asn.au

ⁱ Mintel Global Food and Drink Trends 2017. Available at:
<http://www.mintel.com/global-food-and-drink-trends>