

JOEL FUHRMAN, MD

Make a healthier version of your favorite food

Following a high-nutrient (“Nutritarian”) diet also means avoiding or minimizing the disease-causing foods in your diet: sugars, oils, white flour, animal products. At first, you may feel a little lost in the kitchen without these familiar ingredients.

How do you make salad dressing without oil?

Creamy sauces without dairy?

Tasty burgers without meat?

Brownies without sugar, eggs or butter?

Of course, as you begin to eat for optimal health, you will want to experiment and try new foods. However, it can be comforting to enjoy familiar flavors in a new and healthful way; you just have to learn how to replace disease-causing ingredients with healthful, whole food options.

Beans, nuts and mushrooms provide meaty texture and substance.

When you begin to reduce the amount of animal products in your diet, building meals out of plant foods will likely feel unfamiliar. You may be tempted to introduce store-bought, processed meat substitutes for meaty flavor and texture; however, these are generally high-sodium foods with little or no nutritional value.

Instead, choose plant foods like beans, lentils, eggplant and mushrooms, which provide the same hearty chewiness as meat.

Tempeh, which is made from fermented whole soybeans and formed into blocks, also has a meaty texture and can be sliced and prepared similarly to meat.

Meats provide some of the savory “umami” flavor, which is produced by certain amino acids and can be replicated with foods like toasted nuts and seeds, mushrooms, nori (seaweed), unsulfured dried tomatoes or tomato paste and spices such as nutritional yeast, caraway seeds, smoked paprika and cumin.

In addition to flavor and texture, meats are high in protein and fat, making them substantive and filling. The fiber, plant protein and healthy fats in beans and nuts are just as filling and satisfying in a more healthful package.

Use nuts, seeds and avocado to create creamy sauces and dressings. Fat is essential to human nutrition and imparts certain properties that make foods appealing to humans.

Fat contributes to flavor and aroma, provides foods with appetizing body and thickness, and enhances satiety.

In the standard American diet, low-nutrient, high-calorie foods such as butter, oils, cheese, dairy-based cream sauces and fatty meats serve these functions.

However, fats from healthful whole plant foods can provide the same taste properties and effectively satisfy our desire for fat. Use avocado, seeds (hemp seeds, sesame seeds) or nuts (cashews, almonds, walnuts) in salad dressings, creamy sauces and soups instead of dairy-based creams or oils.

For a cheesy flavor, you can add nutritional yeast.

Use fruits and whole food

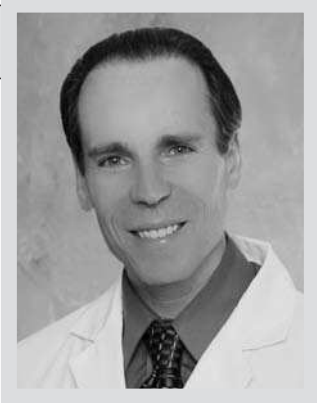
fats in desserts. Typical desserts are disease-causing, made with white sugar, white flour, butter, eggs and oil.

But many familiar sweets, like chocolate cupcakes and apple pie, can be easily transformed into healthful treats. Dates, apples, bananas or raisins bring a delicious, natural sweetness while providing fiber to slow down the absorption of sugars into the blood.

Instead of oils, butter and shortening, Nutritarian desserts utilize whole food fats like raw nuts, seeds or avocado.

For a higher-nutrient alternative to store-bought whole wheat flour, coarsely grind up steel cut oats; you can also add beans to baked desserts in place of some of the flour to reduce glycemic effects and increase nutritional value.

Ground chia or flaxseeds whisked with water will create the moisture and binding usually achieved with eggs; plus,



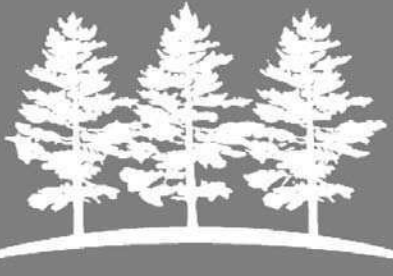
using whole fruit instead of white sugar adds additional moisture. By running bananas or other frozen fruit through a high-powered blender, you can create tasty sorbets and ice creams.

A useful tip: freeze very ripe bananas ahead of time so you have them when you need them to sweeten smoothies. Instead of eating chocolate, blend natural cocoa powder into smoothies and ice creams.

Of course on most days, it is best to have a dessert of fresh fruit, nature’s sweet treat.

Dr. Fuhrman specializes in lifestyle and nutritional medicine. Submit questions and comments to newsquestions@drfuhrman.com.

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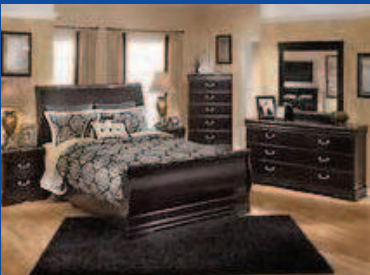
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