Retrain Your Taste Buds

If Brussels sprouts inspired as much appeal as French fries or if people were as wild about cauliflower as they are about chocolate cake, the world would undoubtedly be a healthier place.

You can, however, learn to desire fats and sweets a little bit less and to love other kinds of foods, including ones with disease-preventing qualities. The following retraining program for your taste buds is designed to help you do just that.

**SWEETEN THE POT**

A spoonful of sugar or artificial sweetener such as Splenda works just as well on vegetables as it does in making medicine go down. Go lightly when you sprinkle on sugar; overly sweetened vegetables can be off-putting. If sugared broccoli seems too odd, stir-fry veggies with a mix of soy sauce, sugar, garlic, and ginger to create a sweet glaze.

**BANISH BITTERNESS**

Do you typically turn up your nose at Brussels sprouts, beet greens, and other bitter veggies, many of which happen to have cancer-fighting properties? Keep a jar of olives on hand and stir a few of them in with bitter foods. The briny taste of these bite-sized additions will do the trick.

**ADD FIRE**

Spicy sauces and salsas not only change the flavor of a food; they can change the way you feel. Hot foods are believed to trigger secretion which is similar to endorphins, those feel-good brain chemicals. If you learn to associate foods with pleasant feelings, you’re likely to desire them more.

If foods like chicken breast and fish seem bland, try spooning salsa on top or mixing them with a pungent curry to make them more interesting—and effective.

**CHOOSE COOKED OVER RAW**

If your idea of eating vegetables is some celery with dip or spinach salad, you’re never going to consume very many of them.

Most people can only eat so many raw vegetables, and some vegetables they’ll never eat raw at all. Give roasting a try. Roasted in a hot oven (400°), just about any veggie, even asparagus and squash, takes on a sweet, caramelized flavor.

**DON’T FEAR FAT**

Sometimes foods are just unacceptable without some fat added to ease the way. But think *drops* of olive oil, a *trickle* of butter; a little fat can go along way.

Brush thinly sliced yellow squash or zucchini with olive oil, grill them on the barbecue or under the broiler, and lightly salt—it’s a lot healthier than eating a bag of potato chips.

**GRADUALLY GO FOR LOWER-FAT FOODS**

Keeping your overall fat intake low is still important. But what if skim milk doesn’t go down quite as easily as whole? Switch from whole milk to 2 percent first, then try 1 percent, then skim.

**INTERESTINGLY,** you may notice your likenings are gradually shifting on their own as you add more variety in your meals.

Judy Groce Neel, Extension Area Specialist III
Nutrition Educators: Kent Armstrong
                Julie Bledsoe
                Amy Dever
                Lisa Shaddix
                Rhonda Dudley
Food For The Brain

The old adage that “fish is brain food” may be true. Fish contains omega-3 fatty acids, which appear to protect brain cells. Here are some other foods to make your brain happy:

- **Blueberries** - promotes healthy aging
- **Green leafy vegetables** - promotes “healthy eating” because they contain high levels of folate.
- **Broccoli and cauliflower** - These “cruciferous vegetables” appear to help maintain brain power.
- **Fruit juice** - One study found that people who drank at least 3 glasses of juice a week had ¼ the risk of Alzheimer’s disease, compared with people who drank less than one glass per week. Take your pick - apples, grape, cranberry – and start guzzling.
- **Fat** - Stick with “good” fats, those found in nuts, fish, canola oil and olive oil. Avoid saturated fats (from meat and dairy) and trans fats (from margarine and many processed foods).
- **Vitamins** - Remember, it’s always better to eat healthful foods than to take a vitamin. One multiple vitamin per day won’t hurt you, but high doses of any vitamin aren’t recommended.

Egg-cellent Easter

**Egg Salad**

1/4 cup light mayonnaise  
1 tablespoon chopped fresh dill  
1 tablespoon grated onion  
1 tablespoon dill pickle relish  
1 tablespoon prepared yellow mustard  
1/4 teaspoon pepper  
1/8 teaspoon salt  
8 hard-cooked eggs, coarsely chopped

Stir together first 7 ingredients in a large bowl; gently stir in eggs. Cover and chill at least 2 hours or up to 2 days. Makes 5 servings.

Per (1/2 cup) serving: Calories 171 (67% calories from fat); Fat 12.6g (sat 3.2g, mono 3.3g, poly 1.2g); Protein 10.3g; carbohydrate 3.5g; Fiber 0.3g; cholesterol 343mg; Iron 1.1mg; Sodium 320 mg; calcium 44mg.

**Egg Salad**

1 egg  
1 tablespoon milk or water  
1 (10 inch) whole wheat or flour tortilla  
2 tablespoons cheddar cheese shredded  
2 tablespoons mild salsa

Combine eggs, and milk or water in a small microwave-safe bowl. Stir with a fork until blended. Microwave on high for 30 seconds. Stir well with a fork. Microwave on high again for 20 seconds. Stir again, and microwave once more for about 15 seconds, or until the eggs are cooked. Cover the bowl with a paper towel. Place the tortilla between paper towels, and put it on a microwave-safe plate or paper plate. Microwave on high for 10 seconds. Spoon the scrambled eggs onto the center of the flour tortilla, leaving a one-inch border on all sides. Sprinkle cheese, spoon the salsa on top of the cheese. Fold up the bottom edge of the tortilla. Then fold the right edge over to just cover the eggs, and bring the left edge over to make a burrito. Serves 1.

Nutritional Analysis: 1 serving equals 310 calories, 120 calories from fat, 13g fat (3.5g saturated fat), 375mg cholesterol, 520mg sodium, 26g carbohydrate, 2g fiber, 3g sugar, 20g protein.

**TOAD-IN-THE-HOLE**

1 slice of bread  
2 teaspoons butter  
1 egg  
Salt to taste  
Pepper to taste  
Salsa (optional)

Heat skillet. Butter 1 slice of your favorite bread on both sides. Use the rim of a small juice glass or biscuit cutter to cut a hole in the middle of the bread. Put bread and “hole” in the skillet. Break and whisk one egg and pour it in the hole, add salt and pepper. Turn bread when egg turns white, turn “hole” too. Add salsa. Serve with “hole” as lid to cover toad.” Serves 1.