10 tips for great-tasting and healthy stir fries

By Ellen Schuster, BA, MS

The CDC just released a report that finds about 1 in 10 of us get enough fruits and vegetables each day (2015 data with individual state data @ https://www.cdc.gov/media/releases/2017/p1116-fruit-vegetable-consumption.html). Stir fries are one way to get more veggies (and fruits) in the diet. They are an easy ‘go-to’ for future lunches or dinners (fresh or frozen and reheated). Want to know a little more about stir frying? Check out this 2-page PDF@ http://www.jamieshomecookingskills.com/pdfs/fact-sheets/Stir-frying%20tips.pdf. My stir frying tips:

1) **Think before reaching for that store-bought sauce.** Consider making your own sauce instead of buying a pre-made sauce off the shelf. Why? You control the amount of salt (or sugar) in the dish. Using individual ingredients allows you to taste the different flavors that Sriracha, hoisin sauce, curry paste, spices and herbs add to a dish. (Read about Sriracha and more @ https://foodandnutrition.org/november-december-2017/condiments-array-flavor-enhancers/Condiments: An Array of Flavor Enhancers). Look for reduced-sodium soy and tamari sauces.

2) **Sugar isn’t the only way to add a sweet taste to your stir fry.** If you are a ‘super-taster’ and don’t like bitter-tasting veggies. stir frying might be for you. Sugar is one way but not the only way to bring a bit of sweetness to your dish - try pineapple chunks or cut-up fresh pear, applesauce, sweet chili sauce, pumpkin purée, cinnamon or nutmeg.

3) **Add lovely chocolate and peanut notes without the fat and calories.** Use cocoa powder and peanut protein powder. What is peanut protein powder? You get the peanut taste with less fat and calories than peanut butter. Protein peanut powder is available in grocery stores and even dollar stores. (For those with peanut allergies there is an online almond butter powder but not a soy butter powder. I haven't seen either in grocery stores.)

4) **Sautéed onion, garlic, pepper and mushrooms are a nice base.** Find your own base ingredients when stir frying and add to them.

5) **Get a big skillet/pan or wok.** Stir frying is a Chinese cooking technique using a wok and a small amount of oil. Instead of a wok you can use a skillet/pan and instead of oil you can use vegetable cooking spray. My skillet holds about 10 cups of cut-up veggies.

6) **Prepare to freeze portions.** Have containers on hand to freeze portions for later use as a way to ensure you will have veggies on another day.

7) **Record your successes.** When you find a dish that turns out well, write it down or preserve it for future use/adaptation on your mobile device.

8) **Be a cookbook/online recipe groupie.** Skim cookbooks or online sites to find new flavor/spice combinations. My best stir fry recipes and ingredient combos have come from recipes that aren’t stir fries.

9) **Do unfamiliar ingredients scare you off a recipe? Get substitutions.** I have used lemon or lime juice instead of tamarind in recipes by using online substitution/equivalent recommendations.
10) **Take advantage of new forms of veggies.** Some examples: frozen veggies like riced cauliflower and fresh veggies in new forms - spiralized veggies or “shaved” cauliflower.