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World on Your Plate: *Terrific Thai*

By Cara Rosenbloom, RD

Fresh and fragrant, Thai food is a culinary adventure that's a must for flavour enthusiasts. Here's a guide to making healthy Thai food choices.

Fresh, fresh, fresh

The most popular choices in North American Thai-style restaurants are *Tom Yam* (spicy shrimp soup), green curry with chicken, and *Phat Thai* (noodles, egg, bean sprouts and peanuts). While these dishes all include healthy, lean protein and vegetables, they are often high in sodium because of added sauces. When ordering healthier Thai cuisine, choose dishes with lots of vegetables and ask for sauce on the side.

Most Asian cuisines use dried herbs and spices, but Thai food relies on fresh herbs to please the palate. Using lots of coriander, lemongrass, ginger and basil provides flavour without excess salt and fat. Shallots, garlic, peppercorns and chilies also add excitement and spice.

Authentic Thai

Rice is the staple grain of Thailand and is the centre of any meal. White rice is most common, but it's best to choose brown rice to boost your nutrient intake. Popular vegetables in Thai dishes include eggplant, mushrooms, bean sprouts,



Chinese greens and corn. Staple protein choices include chicken, pork and shrimp.

A sample Thai meal may be soup, salad, curries, stir fry and noodles.

Traditionally, diners each have their own bowl of rice, and they share the other dishes — usually one per person plus one extra. This may make it difficult to control your portions. To avoid overeating, fill one plate with a sample of each dish, and don't go back for seconds.

Finally, skip the deep-fried spring rolls in favour of rice paper-wrapped fresh rolls, and enjoy sweet mango or papaya for dessert.

HEALTH NOTES

◆ **Tetanus: Closer than you think?** The tetanus bacteria, which can cause “lockjaw” or paralysis, may be found in soil, potting mixtures and manure. It can enter the bloodstream through even the tiniest cut, scrape or splinter. Gloves and clothing provide some protection, but the only sure-fire defence is to get a tetanus shot every 10 years. If you have children, make sure their immunizations are current. **Be smart:** Before heading to the garden, make sure your immunizations are current.

◆ **Sleeping beauty?** Research from Sweden reveals that when you're sleep-deprived it shows. Photos were taken of 23 study subjects, half of them after eight hours of sleep and the other half after being kept awake for 31 hours. Untrained observers found the sleep-deprived group appeared less attractive and healthy. Want to look good? Keep fit but also get seven to nine hours of shut-eye. — Zorba Paster, MD

◆ **If you're like most Canadians, you probably struggle to fit in time for physical activity.** It's easier than you think to add more heart-pumping activity to your schedule. To get started, try 10 minutes three times a day for a total of 30 minutes on five days of the week. Get your health care provider's okay first before significantly changing your exercise routine or if you're sedentary.

TIME Management Myths

These common misconceptions about time management can keep you from achieving your goals. Are you falling for them?

MYTH: *If only external events would change, I would be more productive.*

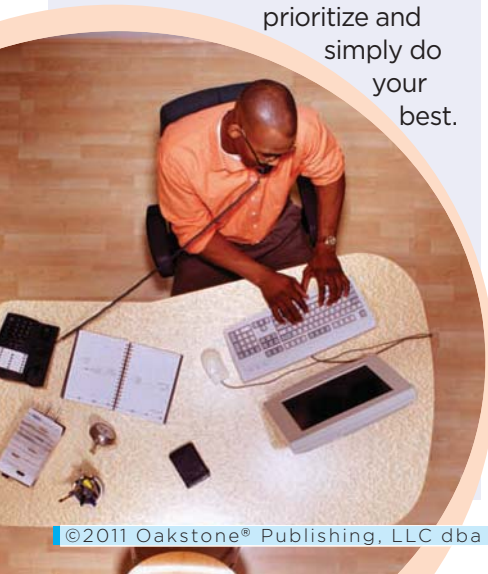
SOLUTION: If you feel as though every day is ruled by stress, you may blame everything around you for your time management mistakes. The truth is, most people have more control than they think. Learn to recognize the difference between what you can and can't control. Then, take control of what you can.

MYTH: *I'll be unsuccessful if I don't meet expectations.*

SOLUTION: Perhaps you can't outright refuse assignments, but you probably can request the resources you need, ask for clarification on instructions and negotiate realistic deadlines. When you speak up, your self-respect and others' respect for you should only grow and unrealistic demands decline.

MYTH: *If I just work harder, I'll achieve perfection.*

SOLUTION: Working beyond your capacity to appear perfect will only cause you to burn out. Instead, realize you don't have to be perfect every time to succeed. Ask for help, prioritize and simply do your best.



Daily stretching is a great way to increase flexibility, improve range of motion in your joints (which also helps balance), increase circulation and relieve stress. It's easy to perform at home, at work or while traveling, at any age — even for beginners. Start with these stretching essentials:

Warm up first. Start with 10 minutes of a low-intensity exercise such as walking, then stretch gently.

Target major muscle groups such as calves, thighs, lower back and shoulders and any areas that give you problems, such as chronic tightness.

Keep it pain-free: Stretching should give you a feeling of slight tension but not discomfort. If it hurts, ease up until the pain disappears.

Pace yourself: It takes time for tissues to lengthen, so be patient. Hold each stretch for 30 seconds, then repeat three times. Even if you don't do other exercises regularly, do some stretching at least three times a week (warm up your muscles with activity first).

Handling Headaches

If you're like most people, you get headaches. Tension headaches cause a constant ache or pressure on both sides or back of the head or neck. In contrast, migraines involve an intense, even debilitating throbbing, sometimes with nausea, vomiting or sensitivity to light (usually, but not always on one side of the head). Fortunately, a lot can be done to prevent and manage them.

To get started, record your symptoms to identify what triggers your headaches. Common culprits include:

1] STRESS — Make changes to reduce pressure in your life. If you suffer from chronic anxiety or depression, seek professional help.

The Daily Stretch



Don't bounce or jerk your muscles. This can tear them and lead to scar tissue as the muscle heals. Scar tissue can tighten muscles, reduce flexibility and cause pain.

Inhale and exhale through the stretches to make them deeper and more effective and to help you hold the stretch.

Be smart. If you have an injury or chronic condition, ask your health care provider or physical therapist how to stretch safely.

2] LACK OF SLEEP, EXERCISE OR MEALS

— Develop a regular sleep and exercise schedule and get at least seven hours of shut-eye. Keep nutritious foods handy.

3] DIET — Cheese, red wine and products containing nitrites or nitrates can be problematic for some. Excess caffeine or caffeine withdrawal can trigger headaches.

4] Other factors — Poor workstation ergonomics, warm weather and strong smells such as perfume or smoke can also prompt a headache.



Note: Seek immediate care for headaches occurring with head injury, stiff neck, fever, confusion, loss of consciousness or pain in the eye area, or a headache that is sudden, severe, persistent or worsening.

The Vitamin D-BATE

You may have read conflicting reports on vitamin D in the news. Some researchers say that most people are getting enough D, while others believe that taking a supplement may reduce your risk of chronic diseases. Whom should you believe?

The Institute of Medicine (IOM) recently announced its recommendation for a new daily intake of 600 IU through age 70 (800 IU after that). Health Canada reminds Canadians that total vitamin D intake should remain below the level of the new Tolerable Upper Intake Level of 4,000 IU a day (UL) to avoid possible adverse effects. While those who live in sunny climates or who eat plenty of D-fortified foods may not require a supplement, those who have darker skin, are elderly, or live in northern latitudes are at higher risk for deficiency — and possibly osteoporosis.

Scientists continue to debate whether we need even higher doses of vitamin D.

The IOM's recommendation targets optimal bone health. Other researchers claim higher doses can help prevent heart disease, diabetes, cancer, hypertension and other conditions, while the IOM focused on a few studies suggesting excessive D intake may be harmful.

Hard D-cision? Supplements of 600 to 1,000 IU are probably fine if you think you're not getting enough. Always check with your health care provider before taking any supplements.



Office Ergonomic Checklist

Proper ergonomic office set up is important to prevent injuries over the long term. Use this checklist to see if your work area is ergonomically correct.

Monitor is positioned directly in front of you and at least 40 to 70 centimetres (15 to 27 inches) away from you.

Top of the monitor screen is at or slightly below eye level, adjusted as needed if reading glasses are worn.

Your feet rest flat on the floor or foot rest when seated.

Chair has adjustable armrests and back rest. Your seat height is adjustable between 41 centimetres and 52 centimetres (16 and 20.5 inches).

Lumbar (lower back) support is provided while seated (use a lumbar pillow or rolled up towel for additional support).



Seat has cushioning and is rounded with a “waterfall” front for comfort.

Mouse is positioned to allow your forearm and wrist to be held in a neutral position.

Forearms, wrists and hands are straight and in line (forearm at about 90 degrees to the upper arm) when typing.

Lighting allows you to see printed, handwritten or displayed documents clearly, but you aren't blinded by excessively high light levels (a cause of glare).

PRODUCE PICK of the Month

Marvellous Melons

Cantaloupe, watermelon and honeydew are sources of vitamin C and relatively low in calories — about 30 calories per 125 ml (one half-cup). For optimum ripeness, pick melons that have a fruity fragrance and no cracks or bruises. For a new experience, try one of the less common varieties, such as Crenshaw or Sharlyn.

For safety's sake: Before slicing into a melon, wash the outside to rinse off any potentially harmful bacteria.



KNOW YOUR

Numbers

Fruits and Vegetables

How many daily servings do you need?

The answer to this question varies with your age, gender and activity level. According to Canada's Food Guide, adults should have between seven and 10 servings of vegetables and fruits each day. One serving is equal to a whole medium-sized fruit or vegetable (such as an apple); 125 ml (one half-cup) of any sliced vegetable or fruit; or 250 ml (one cup) of raw leafy greens or salad.



STAY IN TOUCH

Keep those questions and suggestions coming!

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Keen on Beans

Beans are an amazing superfood:

They are packed with nutrients and fibre and are very low in fat. Including beans in your diet is easy with a little know-how.

How to pick 'em: Over time, dried beans can toughen and lose their flavour. Look for clean whole beans with a slight sheen, a bright colour and minimal cracks. Beans come in a variety of colours and flavours. Red beans hold their shape well and are good for bean salads. Garbanzo beans have an earthy flavour and firm texture and can be mashed into a dense, creamy consistency as in hummus. Lentils have the quickest cooking time and don't require soaking — they are great in soups.

How to soak 'em: Discard discoloured or shrivelled beans along with any



foreign matter, then rinse.

Most varieties need pre-soaking — try one of these methods:

→ **Quick and Easy:** Bring 2.4 litres (10 cups) of water to a boil. Add .45 kilogram (one pound) of beans and return to a boil for two to three minutes, then cover and set aside for one hour at room temperature. To diminish the gas-producing properties of beans, cook as above, set aside overnight and drain before cooking. You can also add a strip of kombu (dried kelp — available at health food stores or Japanese food stores) to the cooking water. It breaks down the gas-causing culprits.

→ **Overnight Method:** In a pot, cover .45 kilogram (one pound) of beans with 2.4 litres (10 cups) of cold water, cover and refrigerate for eight hours.

How to cook 'em: Cover soaked beans with three times their volume of water. Bring to a boil, reduce heat and simmer uncovered until tender. For a printable cooking guide and recipes, go to www.pulsecanada.com/recipes/cooking-with-beans-peas-lentils.pdf. For maximum tenderness, avoid adding salt and acidic ingredients until beans are cooked.



Grilled Fruit Kabobs

- 3 tbsp/45 ml honey
- 2 tbsp/25 ml fresh lime juice
- $\frac{1}{8}$ tsp/.5 ml cinnamon
- Pinch of red pepper flakes (optional)
- 12 medium-size, firm strawberries
- 12 bite-size chunks fresh pineapple (about $1\frac{1}{2}$ cups/375 ml)
- 12 bite-size chunks cantaloupe (about $1\frac{1}{2}$ cups/375 ml)

1. Combine first 4 ingredients in large bowl.
2. Add fruit, gently fold together and coat with syrup mixture.
3. Thread 4 (8-inch or 20-cm) skewers with fruit chunks, reserving remaining syrup.
4. Coat grill rack with non-stick cooking spray. Place kabobs on medium-hot grill and cook about 3 minutes on each side.
5. Remove from grill, drizzle with remaining syrup and serve warm.



Nutrition Facts

MAKES 8 CUPS/2 L (4 SKEWERS)
OR 2-CUP/500 ML SERVINGS.

Amount Per Serving		
Calories 119		
Total Fat	trace	Total Carbohydrate 29g
Saturated Fat	0g	Dietary Fibre 2.2g
Cholesterol	0mg	Sugars 25.5g
Sodium	11mg	Protein 1g

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