

ANNELIZE ZEELIE

TOP EIGHT TIPS FOR WINTER

Cooler temperatures, fewer daylight hours and more time spent inside while COVID-19 is still a major concern can all have a significant effect on when, how much, and even what we are craving. It may be part of our biology, thanks to the winter months triggering biological changes that stimulate hunger and increase cravings for more energy-dense (read: higher-calorie) food.

But just because we're more likely to lean toward hunkering down with mugs of hot chocolate and bottomless bowls of cheesy pasta from late autumn to spring, doesn't mean we should. After all, diet choices can affect not only our weight but our mood as well.

Huddling in front of the fire is the perfect opportunity for planning healthy nutritious meals that not only satisfy but also provide nutritional benefits.



Here are top eight tips for winter:

1. Eat plenty fruit and vegetables

Top up your immune system by eating antioxidant containing fruit and vegetables. Choose fruits and vegetables that are in season such as oranges, apples, grapefruit, broccoli, brussels sprouts, carrots, cauliflower and sweet potatoes. Make the most of frozen and canned fruits, which are readily available, and cheaper, at this time of year. Get your '5+ a day' by making at least one fruit or vegetable a part of every meal and snack.

2. Make a casserole

With a casserole, you are able to use economical cuts of meat (blade steak, chuck steak) with slow cooking methods. Red meat is high in zinc and iron, two minerals that boost the immune system. Legumes (chickpeas, kidney beans, butter beans) are an excellent source of protein, low fat, high fibre and low GI. A casserole with meat, vegetables and a can of beans is a great way to boost your ability to fight disease, as well as being real comfort food.

3. Enjoy soup

Soup doesn't have to be complicated. There are many good soup mixes available to use as a base. With lots of vegetables, some beans or lentils, and maybe some meat, soup is the perfect food to build your immune system. If you happen to succumb to winter bugs, there may be some truth to the reputation of chicken soup's restorative powers.

4. Watch your portion sizes

It is very tempting to snack on junk, eat a large plate of food and still have seconds — especially when in indoors all evening. To avoid eating too much, try to eat your meals at the table, with family members and the TV turned off. Reserve half your dinner plate for vegetables and use smaller plates for dishing up.

5. Drink plenty fluids

Even though the temperature outside is chilly, you still need to drink six to eight glasses of fluid daily. This includes tea, coffee and water.

6. Include garlic in your meals

Not only does garlic add flavour to food and meals, but it is a natural antibiotic. Garlic is most beneficial to your immune system when chopped and then left to stand for 10-15 minutes before adding to the pan. When cooked right after it has been chopped, you will not reap its full health benefits.

7. Choose foods containing vitamin D

Otherwise known as the sunshine vitamin, vitamin D has been proven to help support the immune system. During colder winter months, it is highly likely that most people are not getting enough vitamin D from exposure to the sun. In this case, food then becomes the most important source of vitamin D. Oily fish like salmon, mackerel and sardines are good sources of vitamin D. Vitamin D fortified margarine and yoghurt are also available.

8. Keep moving

Find an indoor sport or exercise class, brave the elements for a walk and arrange to meet a friend so that you are forced to show up. Try increase the number of incidental exercises you do by taking the stairs instead of the lift or walking across to a colleague's desk instead of emailing.