Keep it Cool with Summer Salads

Salads can provide a nutritious and refreshing meal for when it is just too hot to cook. With the amount of fresh produce available at this time of year, there are almost endless nutritious salad combinations to try. Some tips to build the ultimate summer salad add:

- **Greens** – Get creative with your greens! Go beyond the traditional spinach and romaine, and try kale, arugula, escarole or Swiss chard. Or for a completely different base, try making spirals or strips of zucchini.

- **Extra veggies** – Add in as many additional veggies as you like. Veggies are packed full of vitamins and minerals, and add flavor and crunch to your salad.

- **Protein** – Pick a protein or two! If you are vegetarian, or even if you’re not, try tofu, beans or soybeans on your salad for a change. Choose lean proteins like chicken, fish or eggs. Added protein will help you stay fuller longer.

- **Healthy Fats** – Try avocado, sunflower seeds, walnuts or almonds as an interesting topping. If you are a cheese-lover, add a portion of your low-fat favorite into the mix. Remember, a serving of cheese is 1.5 ounces or about the size of four dice.

- **Fun mix-ins for texture and flavor** – Add in other items for texture and flavor. Try something sweet like sliced apple, mango chunks, strawberries or any dried fruit. If you want a little crunch, add tortilla chips or croutons. Another option to make it a heartier salad would be to add some grains; brown rice, quinoa or couscous all work well in a salad. Grains can round out the salad, making this meal contain all 5 food groups.

- **Dress it up!** – With 1-2 tablespoons of low-fat dressing. You can also make your own vinaigrette by the classic 3:1 ratio of oil to vinegar. Then just shake it up after you add your favorite herbs, chilies, salt and/or pepper. Throw everything in a bowl, toss it together, and you have a quick-and-easy, no-cook meal.
**Summer Vegetable & Pasta Salad**

3 cups whole wheat pasta (uncooked)  
1 cup cucumber (peeled and diced)  
3/4 cup low-fat Italian salad dressing  
1 cup broccoli (chopped)  
1 cup summer squash (sliced)

1. Cook pasta according to package directions. Drain, rinse with cold water, and place in large bowl.  
2. Add remaining ingredients and mix well.  
3. Refrigerate leftovers within 2 hours.

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**Cucumber Salad**

1 large cucumber (peeled and sliced thin)  
1 tablespoon vinegar  
1 tablespoon vegetable oil  
1 teaspoon dill weed (optional)  
2 tablespoons low-fat yogurt  
1 tablespoon water  
1 dash pepper (optional)

1. Peel and cut cucumber into thin slices.  
2. Place all other ingredients in a mixing bowl and whisk thoroughly to combine.  
3. Add cucumber slices and toss until all slices are coated.  
4. Chill until serving.

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This material was funded by USDA’s Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). SNAP provides nutrition assistance to people with low income. It can help you buy nutritious foods for a better diet. To find out more, contact your local food stamp office, or call 1-800-221-5689 for Idaho’s toll-free number. The University of Idaho is an equal opportunity/affirmative action employer, provider and educational institution.