Heart Healthy Fat Foods

Dietary fat is an essential nutrient, but eating too much of the wrong types of fat can cause obesity, heart disease and other chronic illness. Nutrition experts recommend that healthy adults limit their fat intake to 20 to 35% of their total daily calories. The Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics lists the following foods that are rich in Omega-3 and monounsaturated fats. These are considered healthy fats.

**Omega-3 rich foods:**
- **Fatty Fish:** Current dietary recommendations are to include fish in your meals at least twice a week. Fish high in omega-3 fats are salmon, albacore tuna (fresh and canned), sardines, lake trout and mackerel.
- **Walnuts:** Walnuts are rich in vitamin E and an excellent plant-based source of omega-3 fats. Add walnuts to cereal, salads or muffins. Add walnut oil in salad dressings and sautés, too.
- **Canola Oil:** Replace solid fats such as butter or margarine with canola oil when cooking or baking. It works well for sautéing and stir-frying.
- **Flaxseed:** Add ground flaxseed to breakfast cereal, yogurt, baked goods including bread and muffins or mixed dishes and casseroles. You may also drizzle flaxseed oil over quinoa or use it for salad dressing. (Your body cannot break down whole flaxseeds to access the omega-3-containing oil, so it is important to grind them.)
- **Eggs:** Some chickens are given feed that is high in omega-3s so their eggs will have more as well. When buying eggs, check the package label.

**Monounsaturated fat rich foods:**
- **Nuts:** In addition to heart-healthy fats, nuts are a good source of protein, fiber and a variety of vitamins and minerals. Just keep portion control in mind. One portion of nuts is equal to 1 ounce or ⅓ cup and provides approximately 160 to 180 calories.
- **Olive Oil:** Use olive oil in place of saturated fat, such as butter. Use it in salad dressing or to sauté vegetables, seafood, poultry and meat.
- **Avocado:** Avocados not only contain monounsaturated fat, but they are also packed with folate, vitamins E, C and B6, potassium and fiber. Try adding avocado to salad, pizza, soup, salsa, eggs and sandwiches.
- **Peanut Butter:** Nearly half the fat in peanut butter is monounsaturated. Resist the urge to pour off the heart-healthy oil that separates out of natural peanut butter, stir it in.

Look for these foods on your next grocery shopping trip and start incorporating both omega-3’s and monounsaturated fat into your daily meals as part of a balanced diet.
Red Bean Avocado Quesadilla

- 4 8-inch whole wheat tortilla
- 1 cup frozen spinach (thaw and squeeze to remove liquid)
- 3/4 cup shredded Monterey Jack or Cheddar cheese
- 1 avocado (peeled pitted chopped)
- 1 can 15.5 ounce low-sodium red kidney beans (drained and rinsed with cold water)
- garlic powder or dry herbs

1. Using a fork, mash beans in a bowl until slightly chunky. Add seasonings such as garlic powder and dried or fresh herbs, if desired.
2. Place 1 tortilla on a plate and top with half the mashed beans.
3. Top the beans with ½ cup of the spinach.
4. Top the spinach with half the cheese.
5. Top the cheese with half the avocado. Put the other tortilla on top of the avocado, gently pressing it down so the top half sticks.
6. Repeat with the remaining 2 tortillas.
7. Place a nonstick skillet on the stove over medium and heat until warm, then place 1 quesadilla in the dry skillet. Cook until golden brown, about 1–2 minutes on each side. (Or put the plate in the microwave and heat until the cheese melts, about 45 seconds.)
8. Repeat with the remaining quesadilla.
9. Cut each quesadilla into quarters. Serve warm.

Sources: http://msue.anr.msu.edu/news/healthy_fat_foods_that_are_good_to_eat; https://www.whatscooking.fns.usda.gov/recipes/myplate-cnpp/red-bean-quesadilla retrieved 01/25/16

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