

Lowering Cholesterol the Natural Way

I have just been working on a television programme in which three people with raised levels of cholesterol were asked to follow a special style of eating plan which has been clinically proven to reduce raised cholesterol, in some cases by as much as 35 per cent. This is the same scale of reduction which can be achieved with popular cholesterol lowering drugs known as 'statins'.

While it is vital that people who have already had a heart attack or stroke to take cholesterol lowering drugs, for many people with no added complications, following this eating plan known as The Portfolio Plan can be very successful.

It takes quite a bit of dedication to begin with as you make changes to the usual way in which you eat but ultimately, it is an incredibly healthy way of eating which may not only lower your cholesterol, but could well help you to shed pounds (which in itself helps to reduce cholesterol and your risk of developing type two diabetes). Below is the outline of The Portfolio Plan and on my website you can access lots of recipes which will help you to follow it.

It is not an easy option; it takes a lot more dedication than taking pills to do the job for you. But it offers a realistic alternative should you wish to try. It is important that you discuss your intentions to follow The Portfolio Plan with your doctor so he or she can give their approval and monitor your progress.

What is it The Portfolio Diet?

The Portfolio Diet is a style of eating which combines a group of foods (a portfolio of foods) which have been shown in studies to help to lower bad cholesterol in our blood. Each one is healthy and has blood cholesterol lowering effects on its own, but when you put the foods together and eat them everyday, this effect is even greater.

What are the special foods in the diet?

The foods which you need to include in your diet everyday are:

- Almonds.
- Foods rich in what is known as 'soluble' fibre like oats, barley and certain fruits like apples and pears and certain vegetables like baked beans, peas, red kidney beans, lentils and chickpeas.
- Soya as soya milk, soya yoghurt, tofu (also known as bean curd) and soya meat alternatives.
- Benecol or FloraProActive spreads, yoghurts, yoghurt style shot drinks and 'cream' cheese.

How do you know that it could work?

Scientists have tested this diet on lots of people. One such study followed 55 people over a year and those who followed the diet most closely reduced their bad blood cholesterol by 20 per cent.

Why these particular foods?

Almonds are great for vitamin E which is important for a healthy heart. They also seem to reduce certain proteins involved in making bad cholesterol as well as giving us fibre and being very low in saturated fat. They contribute plant sources of omega 3 oils as well which may also help their cholesterol lowering role.

Foods rich in soluble fibre are helpful because the fibre mixes with liquid in our stomachs and makes a kind of gel. This gel is able to trap some of the cholesterol in our digestive system and cart it out of our bodies in our stools which effectively then lowers the amount of bad cholesterol absorbed into our blood.

Soya beans, soya milk, soya yoghurt and soya bean curd called tofu all give us for soya protein which in studies also appears to help lower bad cholesterol.

Benecol and FloraProActive products have what are known as 'plant stanols' added. These again help to lower cholesterol in a similar way to soluble fibre in foods like porridge oats, apples and baked beans. The stanols grab hold of cholesterol in your digestive system and stop them being absorbed so that you get rid of them via your stools. You can find plant stanols and plant sterols which have the same effect naturally in foods like avocado, corn and olive oil, almonds, chick peas and soya beans.

In addition to these foods it is really good to eat oily fish like salmon, mackerel, sardines, pilchards, anchovies, eel and fresh tuna for example at least twice a week. These fish are rich in omega 3 oils which also seem to be good for our hearts, especially because they appear to help raise levels of 'good' cholesterol and may help to keep our arteries in good health, possibly helping to lower blood pressure and keeping blood flowing smoothly.

How much of these foods do I need to eat each day?

- **Almonds:** 30g (that's a handful or around 23 whole almonds).
- **Soluble fibre:** You need to get 20g of soluble fibre a day. You can find this in for example in a combination of these foods throughout a typical day: a grapefruit and a big bowl of porridge with prunes for breakfast; an apple mid morning; a good portion of baked beans on toast for lunch; a pear mid afternoon and a sweet baked potato with a good serving of broccoli for dinner (along with maybe some grilled fish or lean grilled chicken).
- **2g of plant stanols:** In practice this means around two servings of Benecol or FloraProActive products each day. In practice a Benecol yoghurt style shot drink does actually contain 2g per drink but other products contain less. For example there is 1g in a 15g pat of Benecol spread; 1g from 25g of Benecol cream cheese spread and 1g from 150g of Benecol yoghurt (which is a pot and quarter).
- **50g of soya protein:** You can virtually get this by having a combination of the following throughout the day: a litre of light soya milk a day (25g of soya protein) and 115g of tofu (20g of soya protein). Soya beans and burgers made from soya are an easy way to boost intakes by another 12g per serving.

This seems like a lot of food...won't I put on weight?

It is very unlikely because these foods will replace things you are already eating; they are not in addition to the things you already eat. The Portfolio Diet usually gives you around 1800 -2000 calories per day. Many men will lose pounds eating this amount of food and many women as well.

It is important when following the Portfolio Diet to give your diet a real spring clean and as well as adding the Portfolio of foods above to your menu each day, there are foods you especially need to avoid. These are the ones which give you saturated animal fats.

This is because when you eat saturated fats they encourage your liver to produce extra bad cholesterol. Limiting them means that you help your body to make less. Foods rich in saturated fats include:

- Fatty cuts of meat
- Pies and pasties
- Sausage rolls
- Cakes and biscuits
- Many ice creams
- Cheese
- Full fat dairy foods
- It is also wise to be careful about eggs

Which foods can you eat in addition to the specific Portfolio Diet ones?

You can enjoy extra lean cuts of meat like very lean steak and pork a couple of times a week and lots of fish and seafood both white like plaice and coley and cod (not in batter or breadcrumbs!) and oily like sardines, salmon mackerel and pilchards which can be fresh, frozen or canned. Fresh tuna steaks are also good.

You can also pile your plates high with vegetables (not with added butter) and salad with light dressings (not mayonnaise and fatty dressings like Blue Cheese).

You can also tuck into lots of fruit.

What's a typical day's meals and snacks on the Portfolio Diet?

Breakfast: A grapefruit followed by a big bowl of porridge made with light soya milk or some sugar free muesli made with oats and some prunes served with light soya milk. NOTE: YOU SHOULD NOT EAT GRAPEFRUIT IF TAKING STATIN MEDICATION.

Mid am: A pear and a latte made with light soya milk or a fruit soya smoothie.

Lunch: A pitta bread stuffed with hummus and salad followed by a Benecol yoghurt.

Mid pm: An apple and a Benecol yoghurt drink.

Dinner: A big vegetable stir fry using tofu and chicken and almonds served with brown rice and a big bowl of raspberries for pudding with a soya yoghurt.

Are you allowed to drink alcohol?

The odd glass of red wine or ½ a lager at the weekend won't do any harm once you have got your cholesterol levels down using the Portfolio Plan.

What else can you drink?

Lots of water. Smoothies made with light soya milk and lattes and cappuccinos or home made milky coffee using light soya milk are good choices. Tea made with light soya milk and a small 250ml serving of pomegranate juice are also good. Try to have tea and coffee without sugar and avoid sugary squashes and fizzy drinks.

Recipes

Below is the full list of great recipes for the portfolio diet:

-- BREAKFASTS --

Porridge with Prunes and Apricots

Ingredients

2 cups organic porridge oats
4 cups Alpro Light soya milk
A handful of ready to eat prunes
A handful of ready to eat apricots
2 tsp unrefined sugar (if required)

Method

Pour the porridge oats into a saucepan and add the milk and water. Bring to a simmer, stirring occasionally. Cook as directed on the packet, adding milk to stop the mixture from becoming too thick. Add prunes and apricots - chop them in half if they're too big. Cover saucepan and let the mixture cook for another 60 seconds. Pour mixture into a bowl, add sugar and extra milk to taste.

Serves 2

Fresh Fruit Salad

Ingredients

2 kiwi fruit
2 bananas
3 oranges
2 apples
2 pears
6 strawberries
A handful blueberries and raspberries
1 mango
125ml plain soya yogurt
2-3 tbsp honey
30g of chopped almonds

Method

Chop all the fruit into small pieces. Add to a large bowl and mix until the fruit juices run into each other. Serve in two small bowls and top with yogurt, seeds and honey.

Serves 2

Blueberry Muffins

These go down really well with a soya based smoothie for breakfast - pop it into the microwave for 10 - 20 seconds if you prepare your muffins warm.

Ingredients

225g (8oz) plain flour
1 tbsp baking powder
½ tsp ground cinnamon
115g (4oz) caster sugar
85g (3oz) fat spread (not low fat)
100ml (4 fl oz) Alpro Light soya milk
2 medium eggs - beaten
3 - 4 tbsp blueberry jam or conserve

Method

1. Preheat the oven to 200°C, Gas mark 6. Put 10 paper muffin cases in a muffin bun tray.
2. Sieve the flour, baking powder and cinnamon into a bowl, stir in the sugar.
3. Melt the fat spread in a medium bowl then add the soya milk and eggs, along with 2 tbsp of the blueberry spread, lightly whisk together until all the ingredients are mixed together.
4. Add the milk mixture to the flour and carefully fold in, do not over mix.
5. Place 1 dessertspoon of the mixture into each muffin case. Top mixture with ¼ tsp of the blueberry spread and then place another spoonful of muffin mixture over the top enclosing the blueberry spread.
6. Bake in the oven for approximately 15 - 20 minutes until golden brown. Delicious warm or cold.

Makes 10

Very Berry Smoothie

Ingredients

5 strawberries with stalks removed
A handful of blueberries
A handful of raspberries
1 banana
1 tbsp soya yogurt - Strawberry
250ml Alpro Light soya milk
100ml apple juice

Method

Add all the ingredients to the apple juice in a blender. Blend until nuts are completely absorbed. Pour into tall glass, add ice if preferred. Cheers!

NOTE: You can use canned fruits like peaches in fruit juice or frozen fruits like mixed berries instead of the fruit specified here, but you do always need the banana.

-- LUNCHES --

Butternut Squash and Sweet Potato Soup

Ingredients

1 tbsp olive oil
1 medium onion - peeled and diced
2 cloves garlic - peeled and crushed
1 tsp hot curry powder
300g (11oz) sweet potato - peeled weight and diced
250g (9 oz) butternut squash - peeled weight and diced
½ tsp salt
2 tbsp basil leaves - torn
500ml (1¼pts) vegetable stock (2 stock cubes)
500ml (9fl oz) Alpro Light soya milk

Method

1. Heat oil in a large saucepan, add onion and garlic, cook until soft, add curry powder and cook for a further minute.
2. Add sweet potato and butternut squash, stir and cook for 2 minutes.
3. Add salt, basil leaves, stock and soya milk, bring to the boil and reduce to a simmer for 20 minutes or until the sweet potato is cooked.
4. Blend or process vegetable mixture until smooth.
5. Serve soup hot or cold with chopped basil or chives and or a swirl of yogurt.

Serves 4

NOTE: You can make up a batch and use over a few days or freeze a few portions and use later.

Broccoli Soup

Ingredients

2 tbsp sunflower oil
1 large leek, sliced
1 clove garlic, chopped
1 bay leaf
450g broccoli, chopped
300ml (1 pint) vegetable stock
300ml Alpro Light soya milk
1 tbsp lemon juice
pepper
3 tbsp soya cream

Method

1. Gently fry the leek, garlic and bay leaf in the oil for a few minutes until the leek is soft. Add the broccoli and the stock. Bring to the boil, then reduce the heat, place the lid on the pan and simmer for about 10 minutes. Take the pan off the heat, remove the lid and leave the soup to cool for a short while. Remove the bay leaf and blend the soup in a liquidiser or with a hand blender until smooth.
2. Pour the soup back in to the pan and return to the heat. (If a slightly thinner soup is preferred add a touch more stock, water or soya milk.) Add the pepper, lemon juice, soya cream and serve. Serve with wholemeal crusty bread.

Serves 4

NOTE: Make up a batch and use over a few days or freeze some and have on other days.

Wild Rice Nutty Apricot Salad

Ingredients

175g brown rice
250g cooked turkey
125g dried apricots, roughly chopped
60g toasted flaked almonds

75g raisins
150g soya plain yogurt
2 tbsp finely chopped parsley
salt & pepper

Method

1. Cook the rice according to instructions. Rinse and refresh in cold water.
2. Add the turkey, apricots, almonds and raisins. In a separate bowl, mix the yogurt and parsley together and add seasoning to taste.
3. Add the yogurt to the rice and toss gently before serving.

Serves 2

NOTE: You can take this salad to work in a container or enjoy at home. If you make the night before, add the almonds and yoghurt just before serving.

Smoked Mackerel and Avocado Salad

Ingredients

Dressing:

75ml (3 fl oz) soya plain yogurt
lime - rind and juice
1 tsp horseradish sauce
cracked black pepper

125g (4 ½ oz) watercress and rocket (mixed) - washed
1ripe avocados - peeled and stoned
200g smoked peppered mackerel

Method

1. To make the dressing - place the yogurt in a small bowl, add the lime rind and juice followed by the horseradish sauce, combine together and then add a couple of twists from the pepper mill and stir again.
2. Divide the watercress and rocket between 4 plates.
3. Cube each half of the avocado and place on the plates.
4. Skin the mackerel and place chunky flakes onto the salad leaves.
5. Drizzle over the dressing and serve.

Serves 2

-- DINNER --

Chilli Chicken Wrap

Please don't be put off by the list of ingredients in this recipe, you can buy guacamole in most supermarkets, but it is so easy to make and this recipe certainly tastes better. For the chilli lovers add extra fresh chillies if so desired or leave the chicken strips in the chilli oil mixture for 30 minutes to increase the flavour.

Ingredients

Guacamole:

2 medium ripe avocados - halved and stoned
juice of a lime
2 medium ripe tomatoes - chopped
1 clove garlic - crushed
1 medium green chilli - deseeded and finely chopped
3 tbsp soya plain yogurt
1 tbsp fresh coriander - chopped

Filling

8 tortillas
2 tbsp olive oil
1 large red pepper - deseeded and sliced vertically
1 medium red onion - peeled and sliced vertically
4 boneless, skinless chicken breasts - cut into strips
1 red chilli deseeded and chopped
1 tsp hot chilli powder

2 little gem lettuces - shredded

Method

1. To make the guacamole: scrape the flesh out from the avocado skins, place in a bowl and mash roughly with the lime juice. Stir in all the remaining ingredients and combine together, cover and chill until required.
2. Preheat the oven 180°C/Gas Mark 4. Wrap the tortillas in foil and place in the oven for 10 - 15 minutes to warm. Heat a large frying pan or griddle and add 1 tbsp of oil. Fry the pepper and onion for 5 minutes until softened and slightly brown, remove and place on a plate. In a bowl mix the chicken strips, chilli, chilli powder and remaining oil. Reheat griddle and fry chicken for about 5 - 6 minutes until brown and cooked through, return peppers and onions to the pan and fry a further 2 minutes.
3. To make the wrap: Place the tortilla on a plate, spread with guacamole dip, top with shredded lettuce followed by the chilli chicken. Fold the base of the wrap over 1/3 of the chicken and fold in the sides, top with extra soya plain yogurt, if desired.
4. Enjoy but serve with a napkin.

Serves 4

Pasta Salmon Salad with Yogurt Dressing

Ingredients

500g pasta shells, cooked wholegrain
150g sugar snap peas, blanched
250g cherry tomatoes, cut in half
1 X 425g can salmon, drained

Dressing:

250ml soya plain yogurt
1 tbsp lemon juice
1 tbsp fresh rosemary, chopped
1 tbsp fresh basil, chopped
1 tsp dried mustard powder
1/2 tsp poppy seeds
1 tbsp chopped fresh parsley

Method

Combine pasta, sugar snap peas, tomatoes and salmon in a large serving bowl. Place dressing ingredients in a screw top jar and shake until well combined. Pour over salad and toss until the ingredients are combined.

Serves 4

Roasted Vegetables and Grilled Fish

This is a colourful vegetable dish to serve either on its own or accompanied by stir fried tofu, Quorn fillet or fish steak. The vegetable flavours mingle together with being roasted and the mustard sauce compliments the flavours.

Ingredients

400g (14oz) new Potatoes - washed and halved if necessary
200g (7oz) small carrots - cut into 4 lengthwise
1 Fennel - cut lengthwise into 10
115g (4oz) small courgettes - cut chunky on the cross
175g (6oz) small leeks - topped tailed and cut chunky on the cross
115g (4oz) green beans - topped
4 sprigs rosemary
3 tbsp olive oil

Method

1. Preheat the oven to 200°C/Gas Mark 6.
2. Place the potatoes and carrots in a saucepan, pour on boiling water, add ¼ tsp salt, cover and bring to the boil and then simmer for 5 minutes.
3. Put the oil in a large roasting tray and heat in the oven for 3 minutes.
4. Drain the potatoes and carrots; add to the roasting tin along with all the other vegetables and rosemary, toss to coat in the oil.
5. Cook for 30 minutes, until all the vegetables are lightly browned, turning occasionally.
6. Serve the roasted vegetables in a dish with a fresh grilled salmon steak each, a grilled mackerel or some grilled sardines, tofu or Quorn.

Serves 4

Spiced Vegetable Dahl

Other vegetables could be substituted in this recipe or added depending on your taste. This dish can be served with some brown rice and a tomato and onion salad.

Ingredients

1 tbsp sunflower oil
1 large green chilli - deseeded and diced
1 green pepper - deseeded and diced
2 cm (1 inch) fresh ginger root - peeled and grated
4 large spring onions - topped, tailed and sliced
200g (7oz) sweet potato - peeled weight, diced
200g (7oz) broccoli or cauliflower, broken into florets
175g (6oz) red lentils - washed
400ml (14 fl oz) vegetable stock
250ml (7 fl oz) Alpro Light soya milk
30g toasted flaked almonds

Method

1. Heat oil in a large pan, fry chilli, green pepper, fresh ginger and spring onions for 2 minutes.
2. Add diced sweet potato, broccoli florets and lentils, fry for a further minute before adding the stock, soya milk.
3. Bring to the boil and then reduce to a simmer for 20 - 25 minutes until the sweet potato and lentils are cooked, the mixture should be quite thick.
4. Season and serve topped with the toasted almonds accompanied with cooked brown rice.

Serves 1

Tofu Salsa Quesadillas

A very quick and easy snack or main meal, leaving the tofu to marinade for 15 minutes increases the lovely salsa taste.

Ingredients

250g (9oz) Tofu (unflavoured) - diced
6 spring onions - topped and tailed and chopped
1 Jar (250g) Roasted Tomato and Pepper Salsa
4 large flour Tortillas
100g (3 ½ oz) soya cheese grated
1 lime - juice
150ml (5fl oz) soya yogurt, Plain
Ground black pepper

Method

1. Place the diced tofu, spring onions and salsa sauce in a medium bowl, leave to marinade for 15 minutes.
2. Preheat the grill to medium.
3. Assemble by placing 1 Tortilla on a baking sheet, place on half the tofu salsa mixture, half the cheese a good squeeze of the lime especially at the edges and top with half the soya yogurt. Cover with another tortilla and press down slightly.
4. Place under the grill and grill until crisp, approximately 3 - 4 minutes, remove and invert another a baking sheet over the top and turn the Quesadilla over, remove the top baking sheet and grill the other side until crisp. Repeat the process.
5. Serve each Quesadilla cut into 4 with a crisp green salad, dressed with balsamic vinegar and olive oil.

Serves 4 as a main meal

Bean Burgers with Coriander and Chilli Yogurt

These burgers can be served hot or cold, use either cans of mixed beans or choose your favourites.

Ingredients

2 tbsp olive oil
6 spring onions - topped, tailed and chopped
½ green chilli deseeded and chopped
½ green chilli deseeded and chopped

1 medium yellow pepper - deseeded and finely chopped
1-2 tsp ground cumin
2 x 400g cans mixed beans - drained and coarsely mashed
2 tbsp fresh coriander - chopped
2 tbsp Alpro soya yogurt, Plain
50g (2oz) porridge oats

Dressing

150ml soya
yogurt, Plain
2 tbsp fresh coriander - chopped

Method

1. Heat 1 tbsp olive oil in a frying pan and add spring onions, chilli, yellow pepper and cumin, fry until soft and golden, add the beans and coriander and soya yogurt, Plain.
2. Place the porridge oats on a plate, divide the bean mixture into 8 sections, pat into a patty shape and coat in the porridge oats.
3. Heat the remaining oil in the frying pan, place in the patties and fry for 10 minutes turning after 5 until golden brown.
4. Place all the dressing ingredients in a bowl and combine together.
5. Serve the burgers with the dressing and a lemon and coriander cous cous.
6. Alternatively, served the burgers with a wholemeal bun and some salad.

Serves 4 - makes 8 burgers

Vegetable and Lentil Bake

This is a delicious vegetarian dish, the combination of flavours really compliment one another. You can use chestnut mushrooms if you can't get the open cap variety.

Ingredients

4 tbsp olive oil
2 red onions - peeled and thinly sliced
400g (14oz) butternut squash - peeled weight and diced
3 large open cap mushrooms - cut each mushroom into 8
2 cloves garlic - peeled and crushed
2 tsp paprika
1 x 400g (14oz) tin tomato puree
1 x 400g (14oz) tin green or continental lentils - drained
2 tbsp chopped fresh parsley
salt and black pepper
2 aubergines, 225g (8oz)each - sliced
50g wholemeal breadcrumbs
120g chopped almonds

Method

1. Preheat the oven to 180°C/Gas mark 4.
2. Heat 2 tbsp oil in a pan, add the onions, squash, mushrooms, garlic and paprika, fry for 5 minutes until lightly browned, add the tomatoes and tomato puree, stir well and cook a further 5 minutes, add the drained lentils and chopped parsley, season.
3. Heat 1 tbsp of the remaining oil in a frying pan over a moderate heat and fry 1 sliced aubergines for 3 - 4 minutes, repeat.
4. Arrange alternative layers of the aubergines and lentil mixture in a casserole dish, finishing with aubergines.
5. Sprinkle with some wholemeal breadcrumbs mixed with chopped almonds. Bake for 25 minutes until the topping is golden brown. Serve with a salad.

Serves 4

Salmon and Pappardelle Pasta

Salmon and tuna steaks are readily available these days. The wide strips of pappardelle pasta give the dish depth to top with the fish.

Ingredients

4 salmon steaks (or tuna if you prefer)
1 lemon - grated rind and juice
225g (8oz) fresh spinach - washed
400g (14oz) Pappardelle pasta
2 tbsp olive oil
4 spring onions - topped tailed and sliced

125 ml (4 fl oz) soya yogurt, Plain
2 -3 tbsp fresh dill - chopped
Salt and crushed black pepper

Method

1. Place the salmon steaks in a shallow dish, sprinkle the lemon rind over the steaks and pour over the lemon juice, cover and leave for 1 hour in the refrigerator.
2. Cook the spinach by placing it in a medium saucepan with 1 tablespoon of boiling water, cover and cook for 2 - 3 minutes, stirring occasionally until it has collapsed, and drain to remove all excess water, place in a bowl and coarsely chop.
3. Place the Pappardelle in a large pan of boiling water with a little salt to taste and 1 tbsp of the olive oil, cook according to the instructions on the pack of pasta.
4. Heat the griddle frying pan and add the remaining 1 tbsp of the olive oil, fry the spring onions for 2 minutes and remove to bowl with the spinach.
5. Place the tuna steaks on the griddle fry pan and cook for approximately 4 minutes per side depending on thickness.
6. Drain pasta and return to the pan, add the spinach and spring onions, Alpro yogurt , 2 tbsp dill and some black pepper, toss together.
7. Serve by dividing the pasta mixture between 4 pasta bowl, top with the salmon steaks and sprinkle with the remaining chopped dill.

Serves 4

Kasmiri Koftas

These lovely little spicy meat balls are great for a party as well as a starter. The koftas can be prepared well in advance and chilled before frying, increase the cumin if you prefer spicy foods.

Ingredients

250g (9oz) minced lamb
1 large clove garlic, skinned and crushed
1 cm (½ inch) fresh ginger root, peeled and grated
1 tsp ground cumin
2 tsp ground coriander
2 shallots, skinned and finely chopped
1 tbsp fresh coriander chopped
seasoning
1 tbsp soya yogurt, Plain

Cucumber Raita

4 cm (1 ½ inches) cucumber, finely chopped
3 tbsp soya yogurt, Plain
1 tbspn chopped mint

Method

1. Place all the ingredients apart from the yogurt into a large bowl, mix together with a fork.
2. Add the soya yogurt, Plain and bind together.
3. Tip the mixture out onto a chopping board and divide into 6 ovals.
4. Fry koftas in a non stick frying pan for 10 minutes, tossing around the pan to cook all sides.
5. Combine all the raita ingredients together.
6. Serve koftas with warm wholemeal pitta bread and the cucumber raita.

Serves 2- makes 6

Red Curry Chicken

The marinade time is important in this dish; it can be left overnight or prepared in the morning for the evening. The chicken is placed on a rack so the coating dries in the oven rather than being softened by the chicken juices.

Ingredients

4 large skinless chicken breast fillets
2 tbsp Madras Curry paste
2 cloves garlic - peeled and crushed
4cm (1½ inches) fresh root ginger - peeled and grated
1 small lemon - grated rind and juice

Method

1. Make 3 deep cuts in each chicken breast fillet and place in a shallow dish.

2. Mix all the remaining ingredients together in a bowl. Pour the marinade over the chicken, mix well to coat, cover and chill for 2 - 3 hrs minimum.
3. Preheat the oven to 200°C/Gas Mark 6.
4. Place the chicken on a rack over a roasting tin, cook for 25 minutes or until the chicken is cooked through.
5. Serve with aromatic rice and cucumber raita (see Kasmiri Mini Koftas).

Serves 4

Smoked Mackerel and Avocado Salad with Horseradish Dressing

A winner every time, this looks so appetising it is great for a snack or main meal.

Ingredients

Dressing

75ml (3 fl oz) soya yogurt, Plain
lime - rind and juice
1 tsp horseradish sauce
cracked black pepper

125g (4 ½ oz) watercress and rocket (mixed) - washed
2 ripe avocados - peeled and stoned
350g (12oz) smoked peppered mackerel

Method

1. To make the dressing - place the soya yogurt into a small bowl, add the lime rind and juice followed by the horseradish sauce, combine together and then add a couple of twists from the pepper mill and stir again.
2. Divide the watercress and rocket between 4 plates.
3. Cube each half of the avocado and place on the plates.
4. Skin the mackerel and place chunky flakes onto the salad leaves.
5. Drizzle over the dressing and serve.

Serves 4

Thai Salmon with Rice Noodles

This is a very simple Thai dish, rice noodles are lovely to use and very light and easy to digest, take care not to leave in the boiling water too long otherwise they over cook.

Ingredients

Sauce

1 tbsp sunflower oil
1 green chilli - deseeded and finely chopped
6 spring onions - topped, tailed and finely sliced
125ml (4 fl oz) Alpro Light soya Dairy free alternative to milk

4 salmon fillets skinned
1 lime rind and juice
2 medium carrots - scraped and cut into batons
115g (4 oz) Mange Tout - sliced into strips
250g (9oz) Rice Noodles
4 tbsp fresh coriander - chopped
seasoning

Method

1. Heat the oil in a pan and add the chilli and spring onions, cook for 2 minutes, add the soya milk and simmer for 2 - 3 minutes remove from the heat.
2. Place the salmon in a microwaveable dish, add the lime rind and juice, cover and cook on medium heat for approximately 4 -5 minutes until the salmon is cooked, allow to stand for 1 minute.
3. Place the carrot and mange tout in a microwaveable dish add 2 tbsp water, cover and cook on high for 4 minutes.
4. Meanwhile place the rice noodles in a large bowl and cover with boiling water allow to stand for 3 minutes, tossing occasionally to separate. Drain.
5. Return the sauce to the heat and add any salmon juices and 3 tablespoons of the chopped coriander, return to the boil and stir.
6. Serve by assembling the dish; noodles, topped with carrot and mange tout, followed by the salmon and a sprinkle of the remaining coriander. Serve the sauce separately.

Serves 4

-- PUDDINGS --

Summer Pudding

Ingredients

400g frozen blueberries
400ml cranberry juice
12 slices wholemeal bread
Icing sugar
4 tbsp soya plain yogurt

You will need 4 small bowls.

Method

Bring the blueberries and cranberry juice to the boil in a saucepan. Cut 12 circles of bread the same diameter of the dish. Place a cut piece of bread in the bottom of the dishes. Fill with the blueberries and juice. And top with another circle of bread. Wrap in cling film and chill for at least an hour. When ready to serve unwrap and turn out onto a flat dish. Serve with cream or yogurt.

Apple and Blackberry Layer

Ingredients

450g Bramley apples, peeled, cored and slice
125g blackberries
75g soft brown sugar
Juice 1/2 lemon
15g butter
50g chopped toasted almonds
90ml Alpro soya vanilla dessert, chilled

Method

Place the apples, blackberries, sugar and lemon juice in a saucepan. Cover and simmer, stirring occasionally until apples and blackberries have turned to a thick pulp. Remove from the heat and allow to cool. Melt the butter in a frying pan and cook the breadcrumbs, stirring occasionally until golden and crisp. Remove from the heat and stir in the chopped nuts. Allow to cool. Spoon half the apple puree into four glasses. Top with the vanilla cream and sprinkle over the nut mixture. Chill until ready to serve.

Health Tip: This is a tasty pudding, ideal for anti-aging as it contains antioxidants. The dairy products used are also a great way to increase your calcium intake therefore helping to prevent osteoporosis.

Honey Plums

Ingredients

2 tbsp of clear honey
2 tbsp orange juice
4 large ripe plums - stone and slice each half into 4 - 5 slices
200g plain or fruit soya yoghurt

Method

Heat the honey and juice in a pan until the mixture bubbles, add the sliced plums and cook for 4 - 5 minutes, stirring occasionally.

Serve with soya yoghurt.

Serves 2

Chocolate Pots

These chocolate pots are to be kept as occasional treats!

Ingredients

100g (3 ½ oz) luxury Belgian Plain chocolate
12 white marshmallows - chopped
115g (4oz) fresh raspberries
250ml (9fl oz) Alpro soya Dairy free Shake, Chocolate flavoured

Method

1. Break the chocolate into squares and place in a bowl with the marshmallows, melt over a pan of hot water.
 2. Place sufficient raspberries to cover the base of each ramekin dish.
 3. With a balloon whisk combine the soya Dairy free Shake, Chocolate flavoured into the melted chocolate mixture; pour into the individual ramekins over the raspberries.
 4. Chill for 2 hours and serve decorated with a couple of fresh raspberries and a spring of mint.
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For more information go to www.portfolioeatingplan.com.

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