

-Food

YOU CAN have your CAKE and EAT IT

Instead of dieting, just use healthier food options, suggests carolyn Hansen

Coastal News · 11 Nov 2021 · 21 · ■ Carolyn Hansen is co-owner of Anytime Fitness.

A STRONG IMMUNE SYSTEM IS our greatest ally towards living healthy, happy, active, extended years. We cannot buy it, receive it as a gift or gift it to anyone. It is something earned through the practice of self-love — focusing on and adopting daily habits that contribute to our health, happiness and longevity.



That means eating a balanced diet rich in all nutrients to support our mental, emotional and physical systems.

However, many diets are so far off the charts when it comes to being balanced with healthy ingredients, doing a complete overhaul would be overwhelming and only open the door to frustration and failure. For most, it's best to ease into new dietary changes, allowing them to "stick" and become permanent as we begin shifting into healthier options.

Keeping it simple is key. A good place to start is by substituting unhealthy cooking staples for healthy ones. We'll boost our daily nutrient intake and often enjoy reduced caloric intake as well without any loss of flavour, texture or enjoyment.

Best of all, these healthier ingredients can not only be used to prepare healthier meals but snacks and desserts as well, helping to eliminate the guilt usually associated with them.

Let's review a few popular healthy "staple" options that in many cases, serve multiple purposes:

■ **Avocado:** Great fruit to keep around since it easily replaces multiple ingredients in both cooking and baking. Eggs, oil, butter, shortening, mayonnaise and sour cream can all be eliminated and replaced with mashed, creamy avocado without losing flavour or texture. Since two tablespoons of avocado come in at 50 calories and butter explodes at more than four times that amount it's not hard to see the benefits of using avocado.

It's great when mashed for guacamole or use on sandwiches and other recipes that call for mayonnaise.

■ **Coconut oil:** Nearly every recipe that calls for butter can be replaced with coconut oil but be advised that what you are making will take on the flavour of coconut rather than butter. Coconut oil contains medium-chain triglycerides that the body metabolises quickly for energy rather than storing. Because it metabolises at high temperatures (other oils would "burn" at these same temperatures), it's the perfect oil for saute'ing veges.

Spread it on toast/bread, add a spoonful to your morning coffee for a sweet energy boost or pop on your favourite popcorn with it for a healthy snack. Use it in smoothies, tea, salad dressings, pan-frying and oven baking.

If you love crispy cookies, coconut oil is for you. Butter contains 16-17 per cent water while coconut oil is pure fat, so cookies made with coconut oil come out crisper than those made with butter.

■ **Greek yoghurt:** There are so many ways to use Greek yoghurt in our diet beyond traditional breakfast. Regular Greek yoghurt (not flavoured) is the perfect replacement for sour cream in many recipes such as cheesecake, mac and cheese and guacamole.

It's a much healthier option than mayonnaise for creamy type salad dressings and dips and the perfect base

for fruit smoothies. Toss it with pasta rather than heavy cream and use it as a marinade for chicken, pork and fish by replacing the marinade oil with Greek yoghurt.

■ **Apple sauce:** Unsweetened apple sauce can be a great substitute for sugar in many recipes. Use it in a 1:1 ratio, however, since apple sauce is wet, for every cup used, reduce the amount of liquid in the recipe by $\frac{1}{4}$ cup.

Don't limit yourself to avocados, apples or Greek yoghurt. Many other fresh fruits and veges can be shredded or pureed to add flavour, moisture and texture to baked goods along with added nutritional value.

Apples, carrots, bananas and pumpkin are just a few great choices.

For the most flavourful end-product, whether baking, cooking or eating raw, be sure to choose and begin your recipes with high-quality ingredients. To add bold or subtle flavour, make sure any herbs and spices used are as fresh as possible. That's when they do their job the best.

Bear in mind too, when you replace ingredients, some recipes will need a bit of adjusting.

Coconut oil for example won't behave the same exact way butter does, so know upfront what to expect before beginning and adjusting your recipe to fit.

If you have got your recipe from someone else, they have already worked through any substitution issues and adjusted the recipe for you.

However, if you're creating a new recipe for the first time, you may need to experiment a few times to get it right. But that's all part of the fun and personal satisfaction you will feel!

Once you're invested in using healthier, more nutritious ingredients, you'll most likely find you enjoy them as much and, in many cases, more than the original "less healthy" ingredients you've replaced. When it comes to eating right, with a bit of creativity and ingenuity, you really can "have your cake and eat it too!"

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