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As the weather gets colder and the evenings darker, it can be very tempting to turn to stodgy, rich dinners every evening, and these (often not so healthy) choices don't always make us feel wonderful after we've eaten them.

Bearing this in my mind, it's worth looking out for meals, foods and drinks which are packed with nutrients, antioxidants and immune boosting powers to help keep you feeling your best, but which are also warming, satisfying and comforting.

With very best wishes for a Happy Christmas and a Healthy 2022!

Hannah and the Project Food team

Focus on...Healthy Eating in the Winter Months

Carbohydrates

Carbohydrates are an important part of your diet in order to give your body energy, and let's be honest, most of us could do with a little extra of that during the winter months! Choosing the 'right' carbohydrates can be hard though; you don't want a burst of energy followed by a massive crash, so try to pick complex carbohydrates rather than simple carbohydrates as they provide a steadier release of energy. Things like vegetables, whole-grains and legumes are great to add to a winter meal. They are also a great source of fibre, vitamins, minerals and antioxidants.



Don't be tempted to shy away from fatty foods altogether

Your body needs some fat to keep warm and also to facilitate the absorption of some vitamins. Whilst you don't need to cut out fats such as butter and cream altogether, it is important that they are balanced with 'healthier' fats. Good examples of healthier fats to include in your diet can be found in fish, nuts, olives and olive oil and avocados.

Stay hydrated

We talked about staying hydrated in last month's newsletter—it really is just as important to stay hydrated in cold weather as it is in the hot, but we often don't feel as thirsty so are at still at risk of dehydration if we don't drink enough. A cold glass of water can be unappealing in the winter, so how about trying a fruit or herbal tea instead?



Hot chocolate can be lovely on cold winter evenings, but can have a lot of added sugar so it's best not to drink too often!

Things to add to your winter diet

- ◆ **Complex carbohydrates** e.g. beans, lentils, wholegrain breads and wholegrain pastas: slow release energy
- ◆ **Potatoes:** an excellent source of two immunity boosters—vitamins C and B6, delivering 25% and 29% of your daily needs per medium potato
- ◆ **Sweet potatoes:** a source of Vitamins A & C, potassium, calcium and fibre
- ◆ **Dark green leafy greens:** a good source of vitamins A, C & K
- ◆ **Nuts:** rich in energy, protein, packed with antioxidants, vitamins, minerals and omega-3 fatty acids
- ◆ **Citrus fruits:** loaded with vitamin C
- ◆ **Butternut squash:** a source of Vitamins A & C, potassium, calcium and fibre.



Perfect dishes for this time of year are hearty soups such as minestrone (see below for a great winter recipe), stews and casseroles with plenty of root veg in them, served with a baked potato and some cabbage or kale, and porridge topped with stewed fruit and a small handful of nuts.

Kale and Lentil Soup

Serves 4

Ingredients

- 1 tablespoon olive or rapeseed oil
- 2 onions, peeled and chopped
- 2 carrots, diced
- 2 sticks celery, chopped
- 2 garlic cloves, chopped/crushed
- 2 teaspoons ground cumin/curry powder/paprika
- 2 tablespoons tomato puree
- 1 can green lentils
- 200g kale/cavolo nero (black cabbage)/savoy cabbage
- 500ml stock—use homemade or a low salt stock cube
- Black pepper

Method

1. Put the oil in a pan over a medium heat, add the onions and cook for 5–10 minutes until soft.
2. Add the carrot and celery and cook for a further 2–3 minutes stirring regularly.
3. Now add the garlic, cumin, tomato purée, lentils and mix well.
4. Add the stock, bring to the boil, turn down the heat, cover and simmer gently for 12 minutes.
5. Add the kale, replace the lid and simmer a further 5 minutes or until the kale is just tender, season with pepper if you like and serve.



You could also add some shredded leftover chicken or turkey if you like.

Soup freezes really well so it's worth making a big batch and freezing any leftovers.