

Food Trends

Stealth Nutrition: Building Positive Eating Habits

(NAPS)—Making sure kids are eating their fruits and vegetables doesn't have to be a chore. In fact, encouraging healthy eating should be about building positive eating habits, not about manipulation, according to Dave Grotto, RD, LDN, author of "101 Foods That Could Save Your Life!" and consultant for the California Dried Plum Board.

A great time to start introducing new foods to children is when they are more relaxed, such as during a break from school or on vacation with the family. When children are at ease, they are more likely to be interested in learning about new foods. Begin by having the kids help with meal planning and preparing the shopping list. This presents an opportunity to try new things, explore and develop new tastes.

"Parents need to help their kids to become friends with food, so they'll build positive eating habits," says Grotto. "The main thing is not positioning the food as nutritious, but delicious. Emphasize the great taste of a new food, because after all, taste rules."

The goal here is not to sneak foods into your child's diet. Encourage the consumption of nutritious foods by showing children that "good for you" doesn't mean the food will taste bad. The more creative you are with new foods, the better.

And when you pack lunches for children, remember that dried fruit, such as California Dried Plums, is every bit as nutritious as fresh fruit. Dried fruits also offer convenience and have a longer shelf life than



Wrap taste and nutrition together into a lunch with the help of California Dried Plums.

fresh fruit, says Grotto.

"Dried plums are one of the top foods I encourage children to eat," continues Grotto. "Studies show that there is a drastic void in getting enough fiber compared to what is recommended in both adults and children. Dried plums offer a fun and tasty way to get fiber into the diet naturally."

Here are a few other stealth nutrition tips to help your kids get the fruits and veggies they need:

- Mix dark, leafy green veggies such as spinach with iceberg lettuce.
- Chop or purée vegetables and add to tomato sauce to create a satisfying primavera.
- Try stuffing a bell pepper with tuna or wild salmon. This is a great way to include healthy fish and fun for the kids to help prepare.
- Include dried plums in smoothies or sprinkle plump, pitted dried plums atop oatmeal.
- Use dried plums as a natural sweetener in baking recipes like cookies, muffins or pancakes.
- Add chopped, pitted dried plums to low-fat cream cheese or jelly; spread on toast or bagels

as a flavor upgrade that boosts fiber, too.

With some patience and creativity, fruits and vegetables can easily become a part of your child's daily routine. And, best of all, you'll be building positive habits to last a lifetime.

Consider this recipe:

Chicken Wrap With California Dried Plums and Apples

Servings: 2 to 4

Prep Time: 10 minutes

- 2 ounces low-fat cream cheese or Neufchâtel cheese**
- 2 (10-inch diameter) whole wheat, spinach or tomato wraps**
- ½ cup chopped California Dried Plums**
- ¼ cup chopped apple**
- ¼ cup chopped celery**
- 6 ounces shredded or diced grilled chicken breast**

Spread 1 ounce cream cheese on bottom half of each wrap. Scatter dried plums, apple and celery over cream cheese; arrange chicken on top. Fold in sides, then roll up from the bottom, burrito-fashion, to completely enclose filling. Cut each wrap in half, if desired, for 4 smaller servings.

Nutrition Information Per Serving (½ wrap): 213 calories; 5 g fat; 30 mg cholesterol; 335 mg sodium; 27 g carbohydrate; 2 g fiber; 14 g protein.

For more recipes featuring California Dried Plums, visit www.californiadriedplums.org.