



SALAD of CHAMPIONS!

Many of my clients give me the evil eye – the look of “...salad is for wimps and will *never* power me through the day” when I suggest incorporating a nice, healthy salad filled with veggies, protein and other ingredients. And sure, if you think of a salad as a few leaves of lettuce with half a tomato and a slice of cucumber -- all drenched in heavy dressing -- not only is it wimpy....it’s probably unhealthy since about 90% of the calories come from fat! So what makes a good salad? Or why even bother with salad? Isn’t pizza or a sandwich just as good?

BENEFITS OF SALAD:

- **Greens, greens, greens!** Greens are so healthy, cleansing and, the darker ones especially, are packed with iron, calcium, vitamin A, C and other nutrients
- **Vegetables** – most of us don’t eat enough veggies. Eat a big salad and, depending on how large, you get 3-5 servings or more right there. Also vegetables are packed with fiber (for digestive sweeping) and potassium – important for our sodium-potassium balance (especially for anyone with high blood pressure)
- **Good essential fat** – use a dressing with flaxseed and you get some nice essential fatty acids in your diet. Other **good fats** like nuts and avocado can also be added to increase the nutritional value.
- **Lean meats** used in salads are better protein options than pepperoni or deli meats typically used in sandwiches plus they are usually lower in sodium too.
- **Carbohydrate dense vegetables** are typically more nutritious and less processed than a white (or even wheat) bread roll sandwich

SO WHAT SHOULD I CHOOSE or BE CAREFUL OF?

There are so many great, healthy salad bars that it’s hard to go wrong, however I’ve listed some potential pitfalls and ideas below, however, be creative!

- **Beans and legumes** such as chick-peas, kidney beans, black beans and so on add both extra protein and carbohydrates to the salad making it more filling and nutritious
- **Carbohydrate dense vegetables** like corn, yams, peas, beets and carrots are both yummy and add a little carbohydrate-umph (and fill) to the meal
- **Dark greens** like, spinach, kale, tat soi, romaine, as the base are better. For example a salad with spinach has about six times the vitamin C as one with ice-berg lettuce.
- **Vegetables:** you really can’t go wrong. Since colors give a general idea of nutrients – i.e. orange vegetables like carrots tend to contain beta-carotene (Vitamin A), red vegetables like tomato contain lycopene and so on – I like to create my salad simply by color. So beets (dark red), corn (yellow), green peppers (green), tomatoes (red), asparagus (green), black beans (black) – you get the idea! Be careful of some of the “**roasted vegetables**” since they can be a little oily and we can never be sure if they have used hydrogenated oils in the roasting process.



- **Lean meats** – the tossed salad bars tend to have lean protein options like tuna, chicken, eggs, tofu, chopped turkey, however some of the open salad bars have pre-made “salads” which can be high in mayonnaise/fat (like egg salad, chicken salad, tuna with mayonnaise etc.). Also, meat portions tend to be smaller in the tossed salad bars so, since protein is something athletes need more of, I usually like to add extra or buy some separately. Just something to be aware of but listen to your body to know how much you need.
- **Brown rice, quinoa, potato, whole grain pasta, whole grain breads** – all great either in the salad or as an accompaniment
- **Seaweeds (dulse, hijiki, nori)** – not always available but sea vegetables are packed with minerals so always a great choice
- **Nuts & Seeds** – brazil nuts for selenium, pumpkin seeds for zinc, almonds for calcium, walnuts for essential fatty acids....you get the idea – feel free to sprinkle on!
- **Again, just be creative!**

One final point is that vegetables tend to be very bulky and dense but they do not contain that many calories. You can therefore have a HUGE salad and think you are eating for a small family, however, calorically it may be very little so two hours later you are starving. In this case, I would suggest adding more of the denser vegetables, more protein or an additional roll as an accompaniment to the salad. Play with your tastes and appetite needs though and see what works for you.

For more information about Melanie Ashmore, check out her website at www.melanieashmore.com or alternatively send her an email at mel@melanieashmore.com. Feedback and suggestions are always appreciated!