

Multiculturalism- Food for Thought

Multiculturalism can be described as a wonderful mosaic of different cultures coming together and living in harmony, not limited to tolerating each others differences but in fact embracing them.

Canada is a multicultural society whose ethno cultural composition has been shaped over time by different waves of immigrants and their descendants, as well as the aboriginal people of the country. Each new wave has added to its diversity. Over 30 million people living here reflect a cultural, ethnic and linguistic make up found nowhere else on earth. Canada leads the world in setting an example of having formal policies and legislations that guide Canadians towards true multiculturalism that ensures that all citizens can keep their identities, can take pride in their ancestry and have a sense of belonging.

According to the last census there are 213 different ethnicities that make up the population of Ontario. Toronto and other metropolitan cities have become global markets for food products from around the world due to this fact. Markets have their own display of our cultural mosaic.

Food is the easiest way to experience other cultures and to understand their history and their food related practices. We could also learn a lot from each other about different ways of flavoring foods and creative uses of ingredients in order to get the maximum nutritional advantages. We need to take the best practices from various cultures and incorporate them into our daily lives

Some simple ideas for adapting multicultural foods in our lives:

- 1. Use of Beans:** Many cultures use beans as alternative to meat.
 - Mix beans with grains or milk products. It increases the bioavailability of plant protein.
 - Add spices and herbs to make the beans more palatable
 - Use bean flour for batters in place of refined white flour.
 - Use tofu, found in supermarkets in many forms: soft, med, firm, flavored with herbs
 - Use Soya nuggets found in Indian food markets. Cook them with rice or pasta.
 - Make dips and spreads with cooked beans (Humus)

- 2. Decrease serving sizes:**
 - Make Tapas; Tapas is a tradition in Spain of eating appetizer size servings of food. When shared as a meal with family they add variety in food and flavors with an added benefit of portion control.
 - Use small bowls rather than a big plate to serve food. Thali is a tradition in India for serving food in small bowls in a tray.
 - Use smaller whole wheat pitas to make wraps, fajitas or burritos.

- 3. Fast Food at home:** Save money and avoid refined fatty foods and harmful Trans-fats.
 - ◇ **Use Chinese method of quick stir fry**
 - Stir fries are an excellent ways to cook foods quickly to save time.
 - Fast cooking results in minimum nutrient loss.
 - A stir fry dish may contain noodles or rice with vegetables, nuts, meat group and tofu. When accompanied by low fat milk can become a complete meal with the four food groups.

It's About Your Health

by Jessie Kular

◆ **Use of whole wheat flatbreads:** make quick pizza, fajitas, quesadillas or wraps. Let your family choose their favorite toppings or fillings. This can be a time to teach kids to eat healthy by getting them involved in simple cooking and talking about it, learn about other cultures and bond with each other.

4. Eat more fruits and Vegetables

- Grill vegetables and fruits. Make shish kebabs with colored vegetables-Greek tradition with a twist. Use grilled fruits as dessert.
- Use grilled vegetables as pizza toppings, sandwiches and wraps.
- Use them as dips and spreads(Mexican guacamole, Mediterranean Baba Ghanouj)
- Use them as Salsas and chutneys(Mexican and Indian)
- Grind vegetables and put in flour dough(Missi roti from Punjab)

Be creative, invent your own ideas using your unique experiences and have fun.