

Keepers in the Jafarpours' kitchen



1. The giant fruit bowl

Agnès gives all the credit to Morteza for this healthy, new family habit.

A fruit bowl is common in Persian homes, and Morteza continued the custom when he came to Canada.

Keeping a fruit bowl in sight and accessible makes grabbing a piece of fruit an easy way to help meet the servings of seven to 10 vegetables and fruits Canada's Food Guide recommends for teens and adults.

"Everyone should have one in their kitchen," said Neumann.

2. Variety of yogurts

The Jafarpour fridge is stocked with more than five kinds of yogurts, from Yoplait's zero-fat Source to Astro's 6 per cent Balkan plain.

As a child in France, Agnès



grew up eating yogurt daily.

The kids quickly grow bored of the same foods, so Agnès likes to buy a variety of choices.

Yogurt is calcium-rich, delivers protein, and the single-serve portions are a convenient grab-and-go snack.

Remember, dairy products are a source of saturated fat, so yogurt varieties with less than 2 per cent milk fat (MF) are a better choice.

3. Quaker's Light & Crisp Harvest Crunch cereal

This whole-grain cereal is full of minerals and fibre. But granola is more calorie-dense than other whole-grain cereals because of the seeds and the oils used for roasting. So watch your portion size. This one has 200 calories per 1/2 cup (125 mL).



Neumann recommends mixing 1/3 cup (80 mL) with less dense whole-grain cereal such as FlaxPlus or All-Bran Bran Flakes for added taste and texture. It's also a great topping on yogurt.



4. Well-stocked spice rack

The Jafarpours have two spice racks — one in the cupboard and one on the counter.

Spices are great for adding flavour without adding fat, salt or sugar.

Neumann said the phytochemicals that give herbs and spices their flavour may also

offer antimicrobial effects.

Some studies also suggest anti-inflammatory, cholesterol-lowering and digestive-stimulating effects.



5. Beans and legumes

Agnès has five different packs of beans and legumes in her cupboards. She knows they're healthy, but she doesn't quite know how to prepare them.

Neumann promises they are simple and quick to make (see ontariobeans.on.ca for recipes) and are great substitutes for a meat entree for families who, like the Jafarpours, want to make more vegetarian meals.

Neumann says beans and legumes are also a lean source of protein fibre and are low-fat, inexpensive, filling and rich in minerals and nutrients.

What the Jafarpours should purge:



1. Mr. Noodles

The Jafarpours have a club pack of these dried noodles. But they offer "very little nutrients," Neumann said.

That's because these instant noodles are boiled and then deep-fried in palm oil, a saturated fat, to remove the water and form them into neat little squares.

One serving has 0 grams of fibre, 8 grams of fat and, depending on the flavoured

powder, up to 1,100 mg sodium, which is 46 per cent of the daily amount an average person should consume. And a serving is half the pack. Who eats only half?

If you're wondering if your soup mix has deep-fried noodles, check the fat content. If it's higher than two grams, that's an easy indicator you should stay away.

"I'll say goodbye to my Mr. Noodles," Agnès said with a sigh.

"Good riddance!" Neumann responded with enthusiasm. "You might miss it at first, but there are plenty of better foods out there."

INSTEAD: Opt for whole-grain pasta. It's higher in fibre and lower in fat.



2. Iceberg lettuce

It's a vegetable, yes, so it beats cookies. But consider it a lightweight. It's mainly water and very low in nutritional value. Vegetables that are nutrient-rich tend to be richer in colour, says the Harvard School of Public Health.

INSTEAD: Opt for greener leaves such as spinach or romaine, which are higher in fibre, folate, calcium and iron.

3. Nesquik chocolate cereal

The cereal is made of chocolate-flavoured rice and corn puffs. Each serving has 14 grams of sugar but only 1 gram of fibre.

Dietitians recommend a cereal with at least 2 grams of fibre.

"I don't know," Agnès says of purging it. "The kids don't have it often, but they like it."

INSTEAD: Oatmeal is a good source of soluble fibre that will leave you feeling full for longer. Or try mixing your favourite cereal with one that is whole-grain and high in fibre.

