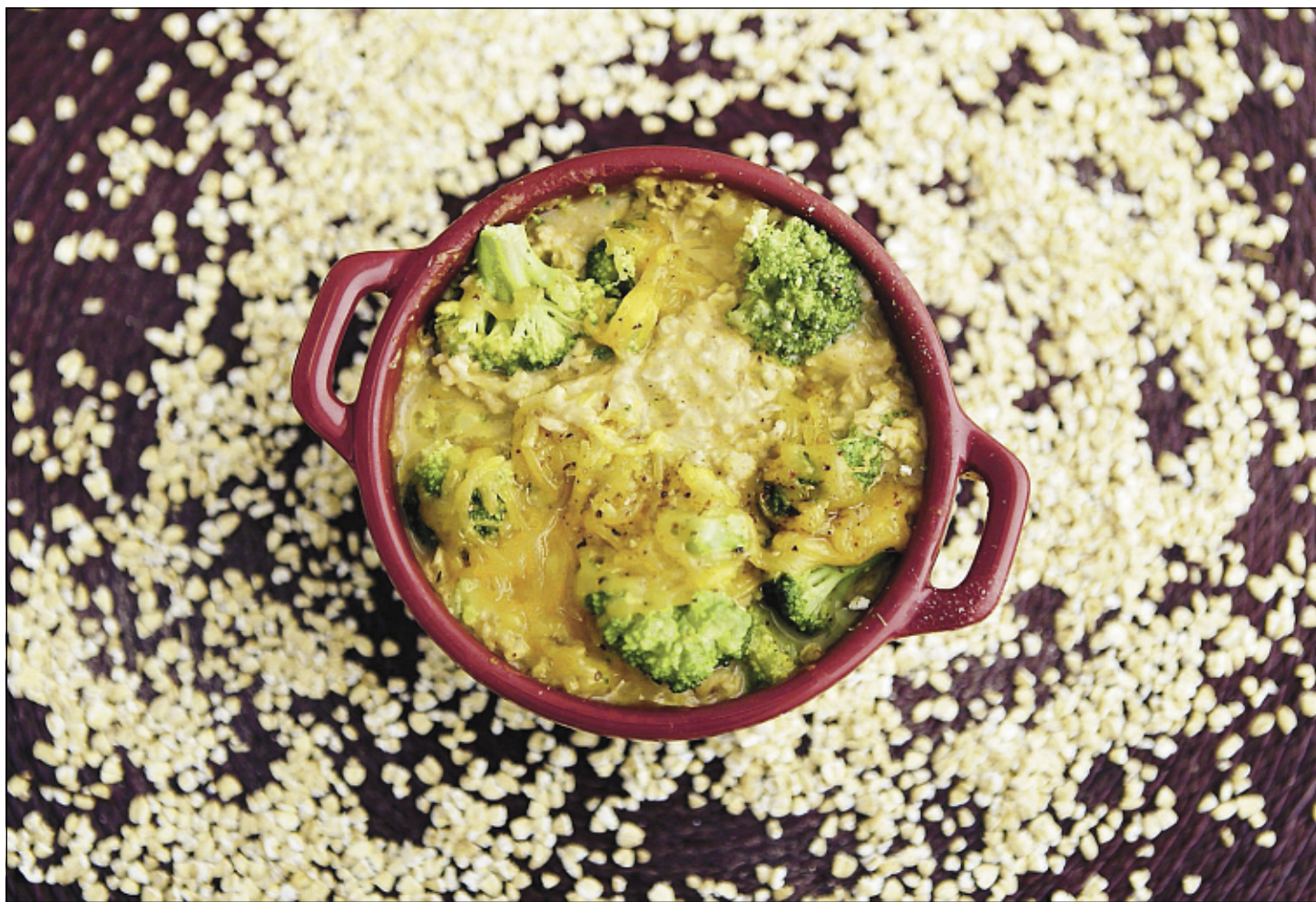




COOKING



STEPHANIE S. CORDLE — ST. LOUIS POST-DISPATCH

Oatmeal is a chameleon, especially steel cut, which has more nutritional value. Try it in this Broccoli-Cheddar Oven Risotto.

Secretly savory

Embrace oatmeal as an inexpensive, versatile grain

By Debra D. Bass » St. Louis Post-Dispatch

It takes a little courage the first time you saute onions with Indian spices and mix them into your oatmeal, but the queasy feeling passes. I promise.

I'll admit that I wasn't an instant convert. It felt like sacrilege. Violating your childhood treat with veggies and soy sauce still feels a bit ... well, unsavory, but I'd like to change that.

At a recent dinner, I served a curried steel-cut oatmeal dish with chicken and mixed peppers, but I waited until everyone applauded the texture and flavors before I confessed that "oh, by the way ... that's not quinoa."

No one complained, but there was a momentary look of dread in which you could see them pondering the question of whether to feel sick.

Suggesting roasted meat, red peppers and oatmeal to the uninitiated can seem as far-fetched as recommending spinach on a PB&J. However, despite its distinct breakfast connotation, oatmeal is just a grain.

A chameleon grain

Correction: It's one of the least expensive whole grain options you can buy. And now you can buy bulk because you can use it sweet or savory. Oatmeal pancakes today, oatmeal jambalaya the next.

Once you wrap your head and your tastebuds around the alternatives, you'll discover

that oatmeal just might be the most versatile grain around. Brown rice is higher in calories and can't compete with the sweet side of oatmeal; besides it lacks that cold-weather comfort appeal.

Oatmeal is a chameleon, especially steel cut, which has more nutritional value. But any variety of oatmeal is vaguely sweet, a great quality for curries and an added dimension in traditional savory dishes and stir-frys.

Spicy oat crusted chicken with sunshine salsa

Yield: 4 servings

INGREDIENTS

For the sunshine salsa:

¾ cup prepared salsa
¾ cup coarsely chopped orange sections

For the chicken:

2 tablespoons canola oil
1 tablespoon soft margarine or

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STEPHANIE S. CORDLE — ST. LOUIS POST-DISPATCH

Replacing quinoa with quick-cooking rolled oats will add inexpensive flavor and texture when combined with soft-cooked egg.

+ **Online:** Is your New Year's resolution to eat better or start a workout regime? Visit WWW.YORKBLOG.COM/NOSWEAT. You'll find nutritional tips and recipes for healthy but delicious food. Whether you've recently starting working out or are looking to change up an old routine, there's fitness tips and events that encourage you to move. While visiting the blog, check out our interactive York County fitness map, which shows places in the area where you can get active.

HEALTH

Vitamin D important for winter

'Sunshine vitamin' fights illnesses

Vitamin D, known to many as the sunshine vitamin, is a fat-soluble vitamin that is important for many body functions.

It's mostly known for helping the body absorb calcium to build and maintain strong bones. Another less-known — yet important — role of vitamin D is to help regulate the immune system.

Without adequate levels, the body might be more susceptible to illnesses. It also assists in nerve and muscle function, as well as cell growth and even has an impact on inflammation.

The reason this vitamin is associated with sunlight is because the body is able to synthesize it from exposure to UV rays. All it takes is skin exposure for about 15 minutes, although individuals with darker complexions require slightly longer exposure.

It is important to remember not to rely solely on the sun to get vitamin D since excessive exposure might be linked to skin cancer.

The major concern during the colder months is that people spend more time indoors and sunlight exposure is limited. This could cause an increase in colds, viruses inflammation and depression.

During the winter months, this fat-soluble vitamin can also be found naturally in salmon, mackerel, tuna and egg yolks, as well as fortified dairy products and cereals.

Supplements are also available to ensure adequate amounts of vitamin D consumption, but be sure to talk with your dietitian or doctor about what is appropriate for you.

The Recommended Dietary Allowance for vitamin D per day for individuals is:

0-12 months: 400 IU (10 mcg)

1-18 years: 600 IU (15 mcg)

19-70 years: 600 IU (15 mcg)

70 years and up: 800 IU (20 mcg)

If you are wondering if you are getting enough vitamin D, and if your levels are within normal range, schedule an appointment with your doctor and request to have a 25(OH) D blood test completed.

According to the Mayo Clinic the following levels determine vitamin D status:

Less than 10 ng/mL: severe vitamin D deficiency

10-25 ng/mL: Mild to moderate vitamin D deficiency

26-80 ng/mL: optimal vitamin D levels

A blood test is the only way to determine vitamin D levels. If you notice any changes in mood or health, a good first step is to consult your dietitian to determine if your diet is providing adequate vitamin D, particularly during this time of year.

The next step would be to contact your doctor about having a blood test to determine vitamin D levels.

After the results are received, your healthcare providers can determine the appropriate intervention to increase your levels to improve overall health.

Kelly Marsteller is a clinical outpatient dietitian at Memorial Hospital. Healthy Helpings is a column written by nutritionists in York and Adams counties.

Online » More features



FOOD

Eating healthy is No Sweat

Check out our latest healthy recipes and cooking videos. We highlight nutritional dishes to help you get inspired in the kitchen and stay on track in your journey toward a healthy lifestyle.

WWW.YORKBLOG.COM/NOSWEAT



BOOKS

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SMART MAGAZINE

Are you a Smart woman?

Smart is a bi-monthly magazine that focuses on issues related to having a beautiful home, a healthy self and a happy family. Find us in your mailbox, your inbox and online.

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BEST BET

Head to the farm show

Watch as teams race to shear sheep, spin wool into thread and create garments at 3 p.m. in the Small Arena at the Pennsylvania Farm Show. Find event details online at

WWW.FLIPSIDEPA.COM

Christmas Emergency Fund

The following people have contributed a total of \$600:



Connie Crull of Yoe in memory of Ronald Crull, Donald and Dorothy Holroyd of York, Dot and Terry Hildebrand of Dallastown, Shirley and Jim Gladfelter of Red Lion, Linda Sweeney of New Freedom in memory of Minnie Sweeney, Gwen and Terry Sweitzer of Manchester, Thomas Keesey of York and Mr.

and Mrs. James Bergdoll of York.

The Christmas Emergency Fund benefits the York County Food Bank, which distributes food to more than 125 agencies throughout York County.

To donate, send your tax-deductible contribution to YDR Christmas Emergency Fund, c/o York Traditions, 235 St. Charles Way, York 17402.

To get help, visit www.yorkfoodbank.org.

The York County Food Bank, located at 254 W. Princess St. in York, is open 8 a.m. to 3 p.m. Monday through Friday.

RUNNING TOTAL: \$14,484.04 AS OF DEC. 31.