

Heart Health

Tallahassee Democrat

Jo Shuford-Law, Extension Agent IV, Leon County Extension Service—Family & Consumer Sciences

Happy Valentine's Day! Take good care of your heart and help your family and friends take good care of theirs. Some things that impact our heart health can't be changed; heredity, gender, increased age and body type. However, we do have control over many things that can have positive effects on the health of our heart and the hearts of all our Valentines.

The American Heart Association (AHA) recently updated (August 2006) their recommendations on what to eat along with guidelines for a heart healthy lifestyle – both are concerns as we strive to lower heart disease risks. Rather than emphasizing percentages of fat and other nutrients, the new guidelines give specific information about which foods to eat.

The Colorado State University Extension's online publication *Healthy Heart Beats* (July-September 2006), summarized the AHA's recommendations and the following are courtesy of that publication. Keep in mind that the recommendations are appropriate for healthy adults of all ages and children over the age of two years.

- Eat plenty of fruits and vegetables, whole grains, like brown rice, oatmeal and whole wheat bread and other high-fiber foods such as dried beans.
- Include fish in meals twice a week. Suggestions include: oily fish, such as salmon, herring and sardines.
- Limit foods high in added sugar, including beverages – that means soda and tea sweetened with sugar.
- Minimize intake of animal products high in saturated fat and cholesterol. Switch from fatty meats to lean cuts. Don't forget to remove poultry skin. Replace whole fat dairy foods with fat-free or low fat (1% or lower) items. Remember 2% milk is not low fat milk.
- Limit processed foods made with tropical oils and partially hydrogenated fats, like French fries, doughnuts, and commercially baked goods, such as pastries, muffins and cookies.
- Choose and prepare foods with as little salt as possible.
- Drink alcohol in moderation.
- Follow the American Heart Association recommendations when eating away from home.
- And, don't forget to get moving. Be physically active as often as you can. You don't have to join a gym or buy fancy equipment. Just move! Walk around the mall or your neighborhood.

The American Heart Association has a wealth of information and many cookbooks available for purchase for reasonable prices located at its website, <http://www.americanheart.org/>. The following recipe is from *43 Healthy Soul Food Recipes* © 2006 (price – \$3.99).

Sweet Potato Chips

12 oz sweet potatoes, peeled and cut into 1/8-inch-thick slices (about 2 cups)

Cooking spray

1/4 teaspoon salt

Preheat oven to 375°F. Place a wire cooling rack on a large baking sheet. On a work surface, lightly spray both sides of the sweet potato slices with the cooking spray. Arrange the potato slices on wire rack in a single layer (do not crowd). Bake for 20 minutes. Remove from oven. Sprinkle with the salt and toss gently. Serve immediately for peak flavor and texture. (Otherwise, the moisture in the potatoes will cause the chips to lose their crispness.) Serves 4; 1/2 cup per serving.

*Nutrient Analysis (per serving)*

Calories 92

Protein 1g

Carbohydrates 21g

Sugars 5g

Total Fat 0g

Saturated Fat 0g

Polyunsaturated Fat 0g

Monounsaturated Fat 0g

Cholesterol 0mg

Sodium 175mg

Fiber 3g

- To access the online *Healthy Heartbeats* newsletter visit <http://www.ext.colostate.edu/menufood.html>