



WORLD FOOD DAY: HOW TO MAKE SUSTAINABLE EATING WORK FOR YOU

Incorporate these practical tips for using locally sourced, plant-based, and minimally processed foods into your diet for a healthier, eco-friendly lifestyle.

In observance of World Food Day, it's the perfect time to explore how making more sustainable food choices can benefit both your health and the planet. Amorie Liebenberg, a Registered Dietician and Certified Lactation Consultant from Dieticians@Health, shares practical tips for eating well while being environmentally conscious.

LOCAL PRODUCE: NUTRITIONAL POWERHOUSES ON YOUR DOORSTEP

Incorporating locally sourced foods into your diet offers numerous nutritional benefits. 'Local produce is typically harvested at peak ripeness and does not have to travel long distances, allowing it to retain more essential nutrients such as vitamin C, magnesium, and antioxidants,' explains Amorie. 'This freshness enhances taste and texture, unlike produce shipped long distances, which often loses nutrient content during transport and storage.'

MAXIMISING NUTRIENTS WITHOUT MEAT

Transitioning to a plant-based diet requires careful attention to essential nutrients. Amorie advises incorporating a variety of plant-based proteins such as beans, lentils, tofu, tempeh, edamame, nuts, and seeds into your meals. For iron, focus on plant-based sources like kidney beans, black beans, soybeans, spinach, raisins, cashews, oatmeal, cabbage, and tomato juice, and enhance absorption with vitamin C-rich foods. For calcium, she suggests tofu, tempeh, dark, leafy greens like kale, fortified plant milks, and certain beans, while noting that vitamin D also plays a vital role in calcium absorption and bone health.

Reducing meat and dairy consumption benefits both health and the environment. Amorie explains that a lower intake of red and processed meats reduces the risk of chronic diseases, including heart disease, diabetes, and certain cancers.

'Environmentally, the production of meat and dairy is a major contributor to greenhouse gas emissions, and reducing consumption can help to decrease your carbon footprint, conserve natural resources, and contribute to a more sustainable food system,' she shares.



mental health



financial wellbeing



physical health



legal advice

For confidential assistance on physical health matters, contact your

EMPLOYEE WELLNESS PROGRAMME
on toll-free 0800 004 770

SMS your name to 31581

BUDGET-FRIENDLY SUPERFOODS: AFFORDABLE PLANT-BASED PICKS

Eating sustainably on a budget is achievable with nutrient-dense plant-based foods. Amorie highlights that legumes, such as beans, lentils, and chickpeas, are excellent sources of protein, fibre, and essential nutrients like iron and folate. Whole grains like brown rice, quinoa, barley, and oats provide important nutrients such as fibre, B vitamins, and minerals, while dark, leafy greens are packed with vitamins A, C, and K, and minerals like calcium and iron. 'Seasonal vegetables are economical and sustainable, and nuts and seeds offer healthy fats, protein, and fibre,' she says. 'Frozen fruits and vegetables can be a cost-effective and nutritious alternative to fresh options.'

WHY LESS IS MORE: THE BENEFITS OF MINIMALLY PROCESSED FOODS

Minimally processed foods offer significant health benefits over highly processed options. Amorie explains that minimally processed foods, such as fresh fruits, vegetables, whole grains, legumes, and nuts, retain most of their natural nutrients and are generally free from added sugars, unhealthy fats, and artificial preservatives. 'These foods are rich in essential vitamins, minerals and dietary fibre, contributing to better digestion and reduced risk of chronic diseases.' Highly processed foods, on the other hand, often contain excessive amounts of added sugars, sodium, and unhealthy fats, leading to poor nutritional quality and adverse health outcomes. 'Minimally processed foods are typically more satisfying and promote satiety, reducing the likelihood of overeating.'

TIPS FOR SUSTAINABLE EATING WITH DIETARY RESTRICTIONS

Balancing sustainable eating with dietary restrictions involves careful planning. Amorie suggests focusing on whole, minimally processed foods that are naturally gluten-free and plant-based, incorporating a variety of legumes such as beans, lentils and chickpeas, and whole grains like quinoa, buckwheat and brown rice.

'Cooking from scratch allows for greater control over ingredients, making adhering to gluten-free and vegan diets easier,' she explains. She further highlights, 'Emphasising fruits, vegetables, nuts, seeds and gluten-free whole grains can help create balanced meals rich in vitamins, minerals and healthy fats.'

BUSTING MYTHS: WHAT SUSTAINABLE EATING REALLY MEANS

Amorie addresses common misconceptions about sustainable eating, such as the idea that sustainability is solely about climate change. She clarifies that sustainability also encompasses social and economic factors. Another misconception is that switching to a plant-based diet is the best way to reduce environmental impact. Reducing food waste is even more critical – according to the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), about one-third of all food produced globally is lost or wasted.

SMALL SHIFTS FOR BIG IMPACT: EASY STEPS TOWARDS SUSTAINABLE EATING

Amorie suggests making small, everyday changes to impact both health and the environment positively. 'Reduce meat consumption by having a few meat-free days per week and replace meat with plant-based proteins like beans, lentils, tofu or tempeh,' she recommends. 'You can also try to fill half your plate with fruits and vegetables at each meal and buy local and seasonal produce.'

For busy individuals or families, start with small, manageable changes, like committing to one meatless meal a week and gradually increasing from there. 'Focus on incorporating vegetables into meals daily and plan ahead to reduce food wastage,' advises Amorie. By embracing these tips and focusing on sustainable eating practices, you can make a meaningful difference for your health and the planet. Remember, progress over perfection is key, and every small step counts towards a healthier, more sustainable lifestyle.

The information is shared on condition that readers will make their own determination, including seeking advice from a professional. E&OE.



**For confidential assistance on physical health matters, contact your
EMPLOYEE WELLNESS PROGRAMME
on toll-free 0800 004 770
SMS your name to 31581**