

News Column - Donna Krug, Family & Consumer Science Agent and District Director, Cottonwood Extension District

### Med Instead of Meds

Since we are still limiting our contact with larger groups I am postponing our Healthy Community Potluck that should have been scheduled this month. But I can still bring you the message that I was planning to share and that is “Med instead of Meds.” I had the opportunity to participate in a professional development class on the K-State campus back in February by the same title. A vivacious instructor from North Carolina, shared her passion for healthy cooking in our hands on lab.

So what exactly is “Med Instead of Meds”? The first Med stands for the Mediterranean Diet and lifestyle. With an emphasis on vegetables, fruits, legumes, beans, whole grains, nuts and unsaturated fat, you can imagine consuming a plate of food that is both colorful and full of fiber. Lifestyle choices related to the Mediterranean way of life include: eating a light breakfast, long extended lunch including a nap, daily physical exercise, and consuming fresh plant based foods that are grown locally.

Combining this approach to a healthy diet with lifestyle choices that also support health is our goal. By consuming more vegetables, fruits, whole grains, legumes and nuts, we are providing the nutrients our bodies need to maintain and even regain health. That is where the word “Meds” comes into play. Meds, short for medicine, can save our lives in some cases. However, if the underlying cause of a health concern is related to consuming a diet high in fat or added sugar, perhaps we need to take a closer look at what we put on our plates.

Are we consuming five to nine servings of vegetables and fruits every day? Are we choosing to eat at least three ounces of whole grains and is our source of protein lean? An easy way to follow the Mediterranean diet is to shop the perimeter of the grocery store where all of the fresh foods are found. Less time spent in the aisles that have highly processed food choices is another good rule to follow.

Consider preparing this Mushroom Brown Rice Pilaf as a nutritious dish to complement your healthy menu. Ingredients:

- ½ large onion, chopped
- 1 cup sliced mushrooms (4-5 mushrooms)
- 1 Tablespoon olive oil
- 1 cup brown rice
- 2 cups vegetable broth

Heat the oil in a large saucepan and brown onion and mushrooms for about five minutes. Add one cup brown rice and stir to coat grains in the oil. Add two cups broth, bring to a boil, then turn down to a simmer. Simmer for about 45 minutes or until all liquid is absorbed. Cooking time for whole grain rice varies according to the variety of rice; check package directions. You can make a pilaf like this with any grain – not just rice. Simply vary the amount of broth and the cooking time according to the different grain. In a hurry? Try bulgur or quinoa, which both cook in under 15 minutes.

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