

Bringing Health to the Table

CHEF JOHN PROCACCI believes in serving and eating great-tasting food that is rich in nutrients. He's the chef/owner of Healthy Chef, a Winter Park business that sells and delivers spa-inspired nutritious meals to area households. We asked him for advice on healthy eating. **Interview by Marie Rodriguez de la Viuda**

What constitutes a well-balanced meal?

For breakfast, I like serving a cup of whole grains, like oat groats and quinoa, mixed with dried and fresh fruit because of the high fiber. For lunch, green leaf salads with lots of raw veggies and a lean source of protein like turkey, chicken or tofu. For dinner, I like to use a combination of 4-5 ounces of lean free-range protein, 1 cup of whole grain and a cup of blanched green vegetable.

What are some healthful foods that people might not be aware of?

Açaí (pronounced ah-sigh-ee) fruit is a delicious purple fruit. It has a remarkable concentration of antioxidants that help combat premature aging, with 10 times more antioxidants than red grapes and 30 times the anthocyanins of red wine.

Quinoa (pronounced KEEN-wah) originated in the Andean region of South America and has been an important food for over 6,000 years. Quinoa is a complete protein that has an average of 20 percent protein and is a rich source of vital nutrients, fiber, minerals and vitamins.

Why use organic produce?

It tastes better! Organic farming starts with the nourishment of the soil, which eventually leads to the nourishment of the plant and, ultimately, our palates. Not to mention being able to avoid the harmful fertilizers, pesticides and preserving methods used to keep produce fresher longer on the shelves.

Which green vegetable is your favorite?


Lacinato kale. This kale offers a bold flavor that can be slightly bitter. Kale is considered to be a highly nutritious vegetable with powerful antioxidant properties and is anti-inflammatory. An

excellent source of vitamin C, kale provides iron, vitamin A, calcium, magnesium, potassium, protein, carbohydrates and dietary fiber. One half cup of chopped boiled kale contains about 18 calories. Eat with fish, poultry and meats to enhance iron absorption.

People seeking to lose weight often give up carbohydrates. Is that really a good strategy?

No, because carbohydrates are fuel for our brains and bodies. However, what can help is cutting out the simple carbohydrates or simple sugars. These carbs are broken down and digested very quickly, but contain refined sugars and very few essential vitamins and minerals. Examples include table white potatoes, white rice, sugar, fruit juice and milk. Complex carbohydrates, however, are packed with fiber, vitamins and minerals, although they take longer to digest. Examples of those include vegetables, whole grain breads, oatmeal, legumes, brown rice and wheat pasta.

How about desserts and sweet snacks?

I am all about making desserts and snacks using fresh fruits. A healthy dessert is taken from its natural state, like whole fruit, and combined with natural flavors and wholesome ingredients. Whether cooked or eaten raw, these are healthy as long as they are consumed in moderation. It's the processed sweets and desserts that are filled with ingredients one cannot pronounce that are filled with empty calories. 



Chef John Procacci

SCOTT A MILLER