THE TALE OF TRANS FATS

Part of the USDAs Health Eating Plan includes eating fats as oils and limiting saturated fat and excluding trans fat. The public is told to exclude trans fat from the diet but we are not always explained why or how trans fats are different than other fats.

WHAT ARE TRANS FATS?

Trans fats are both naturally occurring in some foods and also created through a process called hydrogenation. Natural trans fats are not very common and are found in small amounts in some dairy products and meats. The artificial trans fats or partially hydrogenated oils are produced by food manufacturers by changing the actual structure of unsaturated fatty acids which are typically liquid at room temperature to be more like a saturated fatty acid and solid at room temperature. This makes the food containing these partially hydrogenated oils able to have a longer shelf life by becoming more resistant to spoiling. Examples of these processed foods can include margarine, snack foods such as crackers and chips, coffee creamers, frozen pizzas, microwave popcorn, desserts, deep fried food, etc.

WHY EXCLUDE TRANS FATS FROM OUR DIET?

Studies have shown an association between increased intake of trans fats and increased risk of cardio vascular disease (CVD). This is due to the effect trans fats have on raising the LDL “bad” cholesterol. In order to avoid trans fat in the diet be sure to read food labels and select items that have 0 grams of trans fat and do not contain partially hydrogenated oils in the ingredient list.

TRANS FAT TIMELINE

Trans fat was added to our food supply long before we knew the consequences to our health. Health advocates and research groups have urged the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) to take action on requiring labeling of trans fats and removal from food products starting back in the early 1990’s. It took until 2003 for the FDA to rule that food manufacturers are required to list trans fats on the nutrition label by 2006. Since the recognition of trans fats as poor for our health several cities and states such as New York City and California have adopted regulations to eliminate all trans fats from food sold in restaurants.

Avocado Basil Pesto Zucchini Noodles

SERVES 2

INGREDIENTS

2 medium zucchini
1/2 cup packed fresh basil leaves
1/2 large ripe avocado
2 cloves garlic
2 Tbsp pine nuts
1 Tbsp fresh lemon juice
3 tsp water, plus more if necessary
1/4 cup grated parmesan cheese
Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste
1/2 cup sliced grape tomatoes

DIRECTIONS:

1. Use a julienne peeler, mandolin or spiralizer and spiralize the zucchini into noodles. Add noodles to a large bowl.
2. Add basil, avocado, garlic, pine nuts and lemon juice to a food processor and pulse for 20 seconds or until pesto is chopped. Add in water and process again until completely smooth. You may need to add more water to get it to your desired consistency; I like mine a little on the thicker side. Transfer to a bowl with the zucchini noodles and toss the noodles until they are well coated. Top with tomatoes. Serve room temperature or chilled.
3. Store in an airtight container or sealed mason jar and refrigerate. Pesto is best if used within a few days, otherwise you can freeze it for several months.

NUTRITION INFORMATION

for 1 serving: Calories 246; Total fat 15.4g; Carbohydrates 23.8g; Fiber 7.9g; Protein 8.7g