Cool Veggies, Hot Flavors

Eat healthy this summer—without breaking a sweat.

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Nutritionists at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services tell us to eat five to nine servings of fruits and vegetables each day. In the heat of summer, none of us wants to spend hours cooking on a hot stove. So beat the heat with these three chill (and quick!) recipes from the Life Chef, Asata Reid.

Lemony Whole Wheat Couscous with Garbanzo Beans and Smoky Vegetables [Serves 4]

½ cup whole wheat couscous
Zest and juice of 1 lemon
1 tablespoon extra virgin olive oil
1 small onion, diced
2 cloves garlic, minced
1 large zucchini, halved and sliced
1 bell pepper, seeded and diced
2 cups fresh spinach, roughly torn
8 ounces diced tomatoes (can be canned)
8 ounces canned garbanzo beans (chick peas), rinsed and drained
1 teaspoon smoked paprika
2 tablespoons oregano leaves, chopped
Salt and pepper to taste

Cook couscous according to package directions, stirring in lemon juice before covering to steam.

Meanwhile, heat oil in a skillet or large pot and sauté onion and garlic for about 2 minutes. Add zucchini, bell pepper, tomatoes and garbanzo beans then cook about 5 minutes more. Season with smoked paprika, salt and pepper. Stir in oregano leaves and spinach. Fluff couscous with a fork, sprinkle with lemon zest and black pepper, pour veggie mix on top and serve immediately.

Cheese Tortellini with Steamed Vegetables [serves 4 to 6]

Precooked pasta costs a bit more but saves on kitchen heat.

½ pound asparagus, trimmed and cut in half
1 red bell pepper, sliced into strips
2 scallions, greens and whites, cut into 2-inch pieces
½ pound broccoli crowns
2 cloves garlic, minced
½ teaspoon crushed red pepper
2 tablespoons balsamic vinegar
1 tablespoon extra virgin olive oil
1 pound fresh cheese tortellini (such as Bertolli brand, found in supermarket refrigerator cases)
¼ cup fresh basil leaves, torn

Cook pasta according to package directions. Rinse under cold water, drain and set aside.

In a large skillet or pot, heat ¼ cup water over medium high heat until simmering. Add asparagus, bell pepper, scallions, broccoli and garlic then cover with a lid. Steam for 3 to 5 minutes or until vegetables have a rich color. Remove lid to let water evaporate. Add the olive oil, vinegar, salt and pepper. Toss pasta with vegetable mixture, stir in basil and serve.

Asian Shrimp Salad [serves 4]
1 pound cooked, peeled shrimp
2 cups savoy or nappa cabbage, shredded
2 cups mung bean sprouts (or another sprout)
1 red bell pepper, thinly sliced
2 scallions, sliced
¼ cup each basil and mint leaves
2 tablespoons dark sesame oil
¼ cup low-sodium soy sauce
¼ cup sweet rice wine
¼ cup rice wine vinegar
Salt and pepper to taste

Mix 2 tablespoons sesame oil with soy sauce, rice wine vinegar and sweet rice wine. (If you can’t find sweet rice wine, add a teaspoon of brown sugar to seasoned rice wine.)

In a large bowl, toss the remaining ingredients with the soy sauce dressing and serve. Cool!

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