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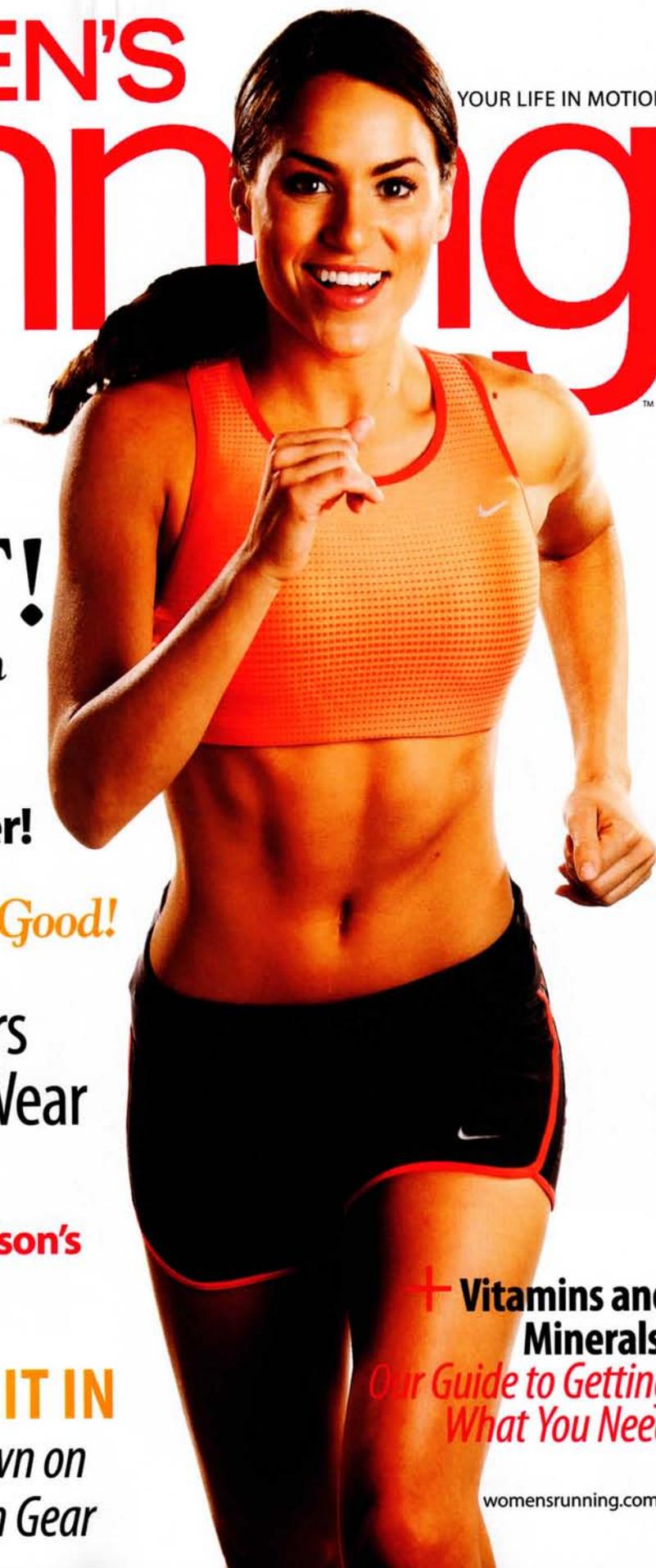


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# eating well all winter long

Pulling on extra layers doesn't have to mean piling on the pounds. When the temperature drops keep your energy high with these useful tips.

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Recipe photography by Salvatore Brancifort

PHOTO BY ELSA DILLON/JUCY IMAGES

**T**here's no denying it—maintaining your weight and making healthy food choices becomes more difficult as winter rolls in. In the spring and summer months, fresh produce is plentiful and staying active is as simple as stepping outside on a sunny day. Plus, hot weather can decrease appetite, making it easier to alleviate hunger with lighter bites. However, noshing on crisp greens or sipping a frosty smoothie when there's a chill in the air is less than satisfying. Try these simple suggestions and healthy, hearty recipes to keep calories under control and your metabolism humming all season long.

#### WARM UP

Studies have shown that people working in the Antarctic tend to gain weight and body fat due to the extremely low temperatures, social isolation and lack of sunlight. While you may not face such challenging weather conditions, the cold, dark days of winter are likely to impact your diet. The key to warding off the seasonal bulge is to choose healthy foods and beverages that will not only warm you up, but also fill you up with fewer calories.

**SOUP** – In addition to being a great way to stay warm, broth-based soup makes an excellent, low-calorie meal. Barbara Rolls, Ph.D., a researcher with Pennsylvania State University, reminds us: “Soup is a food you drink.” Even though soup is mostly water, our bodies tend to perceive it as a substantial, filling food. Rolls’ research found that when participants ate soup before a meal they consumed fewer total calories. *For a quick and satisfying soup, try our Simple Sweet Potato Soup. (page 56)*

**CHILI** – A fiery bowl of chili can heat you up in more ways than one. When you include chili pepper or extra hot sauce, you increase the capsaicin content, the substance responsible for the spicy heat. Capsaicin has been linked to a decrease in triglyceride levels and an increase in metabolism. Stick to vegetarian or turkey chili to reduce the calorie and fat content.

**TEA** – Tea is a healthy, calorie-free drink any time of year, and winter months are the perfect time to settle in with a steamy cup. Green tea is a particularly good choice because it contains catechins, which have been shown to boost metabolism. Steer clear of extra sugar or cream to keep your drink low in calories.

**COCOA** – Hot cocoa is a surefire way to chase away the winter blues, but with all that sweetness, how could it be a healthy option? Pure cocoa powder is actually an excellent source of antioxidants. If you can skip the marshmallows, heat up a mug of real cocoa for a healthy winter drink. *For a mint chocolate treat, try our Tealicious Peppermint Cocoa recipe. (page 57)*

#### THINK HEARTY

Dropping temperatures can contribute to cravings for comfort foods like mashed potatoes and macaroni and cheese. These winter favorites don't have to be high in empty calories if you prepare them with healthier ingredients.

**WHOLE GRAINS** – Brown rice, oat bran, steel-cut oats, quinoa and barley are all high-fiber, filling grains. By cooking with whole-wheat pasta and whole grains versus their processed alternatives (white pasta or white rice), you increase the nutritional value. Complement grains by mixing them with bite-sized veggies. You can also fold a squash or cauliflower puree into your favorite pasta sauce to amp up both the health benefits and the heartiness of the dish. *For a delicious take on a comforting favorite, try Macaroni and Cheese with Butternut Squash. (page 57)*

**SWEET POTATOES** – Warm mashed potatoes are the ultimate American side dish. Although white potatoes are high in vitamin C and potassium, they raise blood sugar quickly, which can lead to further cravings. For a healthier alternative, switch to sweet potatoes, which contain beta-carotene and have a lower glycemic index. Leave some of the skin on before mashing to increase the fiber content, and skip the cream and butter to minimize calories and allow the potato's natural sweetness to shine.

## PICK THE PERFECT PRODUCE

Although fresh berries and melons are hard to come by in the winter, there are a host of fruits and veggies available if you know where to look. Staples like apples, bananas, carrots, celery and onions are always in the produce department. And winter is the perfect time to enjoy fresh oranges, winter squash and rutabaga. Additional fruit and vegetable options can be found throughout the grocery store. Look for the following:

**PACKAGED FRUIT** – Fruit packed in juice is a delicious and quick snack. Seek out varieties with no added sugar, and stock up on fruit cups to serve as a healthy, portable treat any time of year. Keep a jar of applesauce on hand for a quick dessert option. Simply scoop the applesauce into a ramekin, warm in the microwave and top with a pinch of cinnamon or a sprinkle of granola.

**FROZEN VEGETABLES AND FRUIT** – It is a common misconception that fresh fruits and vegetables are always the healthiest options. Since frozen produce is typically packaged shortly after harvest, its nutrients are more likely to be preserved. Additionally, frozen veggies and fruit are often pre-washed and cut. Eliminating troublesome prep work can make it easier to fill up on the recommended nine servings per day.

*Freelance health writer Michelle Gibeault Traub has been a registered dietitian for 13 years. You can learn more about her at [webhealthwriter.com](http://webhealthwriter.com).*

## PRIME TEA TIME

Winter is the perfect time to enjoy a soothing cup of tea. Explore your options with these varieties.

**TEA** – Green, black, white and oolong teas are all produced from the leaves of the tea plant (*Camellia sinensis*). They vary primarily in the way that the tea leaves are processed. Tea has an astounding list of health

benefits due to the high antioxidant content. Some of the heavy-hitters include:

- > Reduced cancer risk
- > Improved bone and tooth health
- > Increased metabolism

**HERBAL TEA** – While very different from regular tea, herbal teas offer their own benefits. Made from a number of different plants, herbal teas provide rich flavor without any calories, and often have unique

health benefits. Try these options:

- Peppermint** for improved digestion
- Chamomile** for calming anxiety
- Ginger** for nausea relief

# HEALTHY, HEARTY RECIPES

## SIMPLE SWEET POTATO SOUP

*This speedy soup can be made with any vegetable you choose, but sweet potato will give you a healthy dose of vitamins A and C.*



**SIMPLE SWEET POTATO SOUP** Serves one

- 1 medium sweet potato, scrubbed clean
- 1 cup low-sodium chicken broth
- 1-2 cloves of garlic, finely chopped

Pierce both ends of the sweet potato with a fork and microwave on high for three to four minutes. While the potato is cooking, put the chicken broth and garlic in a small saucepan, and bring to a simmer over medium heat. When the sweet potato is soft, slice it down the middle (carefully, as it will be very hot). Holding the potato with a potholder, use a spoon to scrape the flesh from each half. Stir the potato into the chicken stock, breaking it into pieces with the side of the spoon or a potato masher. Bring the soup to a boil and then simmer for two minutes, continuing to mash the mixture until smooth. Ladle into a bowl and season with salt and pepper to taste.

*Nutritional info per serving:*

135 calories, 0 g fat, 29 g carbohydrates, 5 g protein, 420 mg sodium



## MACARONI AND CHEESE WITH BUTTERNUT SQUASH

*By swapping out creamy cheese sauce for butternut squash, this healthy twist on comfort food is low in fat but high in flavor, fiber and potassium.*

### MACARONI AND CHEESE WITH BUTTERNUT SQUASH *Serves six*

- 1 small butternut squash, peeled, seeded and cut into 1-inch cubes (about 3 cups)**
- 1 cup homemade or low-sodium canned chicken stock, skimmed of fat**
- 1 1/2 cups fat-free milk**
- Pinch of freshly grated nutmeg**
- Pinch of cayenne pepper**
- 3/4 tsp. coarse salt**
- Freshly ground black pepper**
- 1 pound whole wheat macaroni, cooked to packaged directions**
- 1 cup low-fat cheddar cheese, finely grated**
- 4 tbsp. Parmesan cheese, finely grated**
- 2 tbsp. whole-wheat breadcrumbs**
- 1 tsp. olive oil**
- Olive-oil cooking spray**
- 1/2 cup part-skim ricotta cheese**

Preheat oven to 375° F. Combine squash, stock and milk in a medium saucepan, and bring to a boil over medium-high heat. Reduce heat to medium-low. Simmer until squash is tender, about 20 minutes. Remove from heat. Mash contents of saucepan; stir in nutmeg, cayenne and salt, and season with black pepper. Transfer macaroni to a large bowl. Stir in squash mixture, cheddar, ricotta and two tablespoons Parmesan.

Lightly coat a nine-inch square baking dish (four inches deep) with cooking spray. Transfer noodle mixture to dish. In a small bowl, combine breadcrumbs, remaining two tablespoons Parmesan and oil; sprinkle evenly over noodle mixture. Cover with foil, and bake 20 minutes. Remove foil, and continue baking until lightly browned and crisp on top, 30 to 40 minutes more. Serve immediately.

*Nutritional info per serving:*  
390 calories, 5 g fat, 68 g carbohydrates, 28 g protein, 512 mg sodium

*Recipe courtesy of Martha Stewart Living Omnimedia, Inc. Copyright © 2003. Originally published in the January 2003 issue of Martha Stewart Living magazine. For more great recipes visit marthastewart.com.*

### TEALICIOUS PEPPERMINT COCOA *Serves one*

- 1 cup unsweetened almond milk**
- 1 peppermint tea bag**
- 1 tbsp. unsweetened cocoa**
- 1/4 tsp. vanilla extract**
- Liquid stevia (or other low-calorie sweetener)**

Pour almond milk in a mug and microwave on high for one minute. Drop in tea bag and allow to steep for two minutes. Remove bag. Stir in cocoa and vanilla. Add a few drops of liquid stevia or other sweetener to taste.

*Nutritional info per serving:*  
52 calories, 4 g fat, 6 g carbohydrates, 2 g protein, 181 mg sodium

## TEALICIOUS PEPPERMINT COCOA

*When prepared using stevia, this rich chocolate treat has fewer than 60 calories.*

