



More oatmeal is consumed in January than any other month. So it's appropriate that January is National Oatmeal Month and the perfect time to start the year off right, focusing on improving your overall health by increasing whole grains in your diet.

Although third in popularity to wheat and corn, oats are the most nutritious of the cereal grasses, packed with protein, thiamine, iron and dietary fiber.

Because of the health benefits, there has been increasing interest in oatmeal in recent years. University studies have shown that oatmeal can lower the risk of heart disease, and help to reduce blood cholesterol levels, manage your weight and prevent Type-2 diabetes.

So keep the oatmeal handy. Mix it in homemade meatballs and meatloaf. Make a unique pie

crust by using oatmeal for half the flour. Add oatmeal to thicken chili. Stir oatmeal into muffins, pancakes and breads for nutty flavor and healthy fiber.

“Old-Fashioned” oatmeal is interchangeable with “Quick Oats,” “One Minute Oats” and “Rolled Oats” in the following recipes (all use uncooked oatmeal). Do not use “Instant Oatmeal.”

CLASSIC MEATLOAF

1-1/2 pounds lean ground beef or turkey

3/4 cup oatmeal

3/4 cup finely chopped onion

1/2 cup catsup

1 egg, lightly beaten

1 tablespoon Worcestershire sauce or soy sauce

2 cloves garlic, minced

1/2 teaspoon salt

1/4 teaspoon black pepper

Heat oven to 350° F. Combine all ingredients in large bowl; mix lightly but thoroughly. Shape meatloaf mixture into 10x6-inch loaf on rack of broiler pan.

Bake 50 to 55 minutes or until meatloaf is to medium doneness (160° F for beef, 170° F for turkey), until not pink in center and juices show no pink color. Let stand 5 minutes before slicing. Cover and refrigerate leftovers promptly and use within 2 days, or wrap airtight and freeze up to 3 months. Yields 6 to 8 servings.

OAT PILAF

1/2 cup each chopped red and yellow bell pepper

1/2 cup chopped mushrooms

1/2 cup sliced green onions

2 garlic cloves, minced

1 tablespoon olive oil

1-3/4 cups oatmeal

2 egg whites

3/4 cup chicken broth

2 tablespoons minced, fresh basil leaves or 2 teaspoons dried basil

1/2 teaspoon salt

1/4 teaspoon black pepper

In 10-inch nonstick skillet, cook peppers, mushrooms, green onions and garlic in oil over medium heat, stirring occasionally, until vegetables are crisp-tender, about 2 minutes. In large bowl, mix oats and egg whites until oats are evenly coated. Add oats to vegetable mixture in skillet.

Cook over medium heat, stirring occasionally, until oats are dry and separated, about 5 to 6 minutes. Add broth, basil, salt and pepper. Continue cooking, stirring occasionally, 2 to 3 minutes or until liquid is absorbed. Serve immediately. Serves 8.

TURKEY BURGERS

1 pound very lean ground turkey breast

1 cup Quaker Oats

3/4 cup finely chopped onion

3/4 cup finely chopped red or green bell pepper

1/2 cup shredded zucchini

1/4 cup catsup

2 cloves garlic, minced

1/2 teaspoon salt (optional)

6 whole wheat hamburger buns, split, toasted

1/2 cup nonfat sour cream

Lettuce and tomato slices

Lightly spray rack of broiler pan with cooking spray.

In medium bowl, combine turkey, oats, onion, bell pepper, zucchini, catsup, garlic and salt, mixing lightly but thoroughly. Shape into six 1/2-inch-thick patties.

Broil or grill patties 7 to 9 minutes on each side or until golden brown and no longer pink in center. Serve on buns with rounded tablespoon sour cream per serving. Garnish with lettuce and tomato, if desired. Makes 6 burgers.

CRANBERRY-GINGER OAT SCONES

1-1/3 cups all-purpose flour

1 cup oatmeal

1/4 cup granulated sugar

2 teaspoons baking powder

1 teaspoon ground ginger

1/2 teaspoon baking soda

1/2 teaspoon salt

1 stick butter or margarine, chilled, cut into pieces

3/4 cup sweetened dried cranberries

1/3 cup plain nonfat yogurt

1 egg

1 tablespoon granulated sugar

Heat oven to 400° F.

In large bowl, combine flour, oats, 1/4 cup sugar, baking powder, ginger, baking soda and salt; mix well.

Work butter into dry ingredients with fork or fingertips until mixture resembles small peas. Stir in cranberries. In small bowl, combine yogurt and egg; blend well. Add to dry ingredients all at once; stir with fork until soft dough forms.

Turn dough out onto floured surface; knead gently 8 to 10 times. Transfer to ungreased cookie sheet. Pat into 8-inch-diameter circle; sprinkle with remaining 1 tablespoon sugar. Cut into 8 wedges; separate wedges slightly.

Bake 12 to 14 minutes or until light golden brown. Separate wedges; transfer to cooling rack. Serve warm. Makes 8 scones.

For biscuits and scones that are light, tender and flaky, cut chilled butter or margarine into dry ingredients until particles are the size of coarse crumbs. After adding liquids, handle dough as gently and as little as possible.

BANANA-BLUEBERRY OAT BREAD



Milk (about 2 medium) and dust it with flour. Combine flour, salt, sugar, and baking powder in a bowl. Place berries and milk in a separate bowl. Add the berries and milk to the flour mixture and stir until the berries are coated. Place the berries in a separate bowl and set aside.