

RESEARCH MATTERS

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LENTILS IN BROWNIES?

FOOD THAT TASTES GOOD AND IS GOOD FOR YOU

By Liz Snyder

Researchers at the RIA are finding ways to help older adults get the nutrition they need in foods they prefer to eat by adding healthy ingredients that taste good and are good for you.

Heather Keller, Schlegel Research Chair in Nutrition and Aging says, for a variety of reasons, many older adults may not get enough key nutrients in their diets to support their health and well-being. They may have a poor appetite or chewing may be difficult so they choose food that tastes good and is easy to eat.

“The reality is, most people want to eat sweets and things that taste good. So, we thought perhaps we can put nutritious ingredients in foods that people want to eat. Something can taste good and also be good for you,” she says.



That’s the idea behind Nutrition in Disguise, a series of recipes that ‘hide’ ingredients you wouldn’t typically find in things like sweets – like putting lentils in brownies, or wheat germ in muffins. Lentils add protein and fibre. Wheat germ adds fibre and vitamin E. These are both nutrients often lacking in the diets of older adults.

“We recognize malnutrition is a big issue whether in acute or long-term care and there have been efforts to address this problem. But the focus is often on energy and protein and we seem to have forgotten that good nutrition – and therefore good

Continued on next page...

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health and well-being -- is also about vitamins, minerals and fibre. With these recipes, we hope to change that.”

Keller and her research team worked with chefs and students from the University of Waterloo and the University of Guelph to develop 21 recipes which they tested first at the RIA in September 2018. The top 10 from that session were then tested by residents at three Schlegel Villages – The Village of Arbour Trails, The Village of Riverside Glen and The Village at University Gates. Testers were asked to share their opinions on the taste and texture of the food, and these results helped whittle the list down to eight.

Recipe cards have been created for those eight foods. The cards include not just how to make the recipe, but also information about how the ‘disguised’ ingredient makes the food healthier. Keller’s team is also

working on creating fact sheets for chefs, food service managers and dietitians who work in long-term care. The fact sheets will contain easy to use information about how different ingredients can easily be incorporated into food to enhance the nutritional value – like lentils for fibre, or squash for Vitamin A.

Next, two dietetic interns in the Northern Ontario internship program will work on new recipes that focus on using beans and lentils to enhance nutrition

The most popular recipe? Lentil brownies

Keller’s favourite? Orange carrot muffins ■

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The Schlegel-UW Research Institute for Aging aims to enhance the quality of life and care of older adults through partnerships in research, education and practice. Innovations are developed and tested in the Schlegel Villages, and then shared to benefit older adults everywhere.

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