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REGISTERED DIETITIANS…BRING FOOD AND NUTRITION EXPERTISE TO THE TABLE

March is National Nutrition Month®, when the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics (formerly the American Dietetic Association) reminds everyone to return to the basics of healthy eating. It is also a time when the Academy celebrates registered dietitians as the food and nutrition experts.

"March 14 marks the Fifth Annual Registered Dietitian Day, reminding everyone that a registered dietitian is the best source of practical, affordable and credible food and nutrition information," says registered dietitian and Academy Spokesperson Dee Sandquist.

The RD credential is a vital distinction when determining where Americans can get safe and accurate nutrition information. Registered Dietitian Day celebrates the commitment of RDs, during National Nutrition Month and throughout the year, as strong supporters of improving the nutrition and health of Americans and people all over the world.

"Science highlights nutrition as one of the leading lifestyle factors in health promotion and disease prevention throughout life. Registered dietitians translate nutrition science into practical and applicable ways for people to bring nutritious foods into their daily lives. It is our role to discern between fact and fiction and give people the tools to make realistic eating behavior changes," Sandquist says.

Registered dietitians are highly qualified food and nutrition experts who meet academic and professional requirements, including earning at least a bachelor's degree, completing a supervised practice program and passing a registration examination.

"Registered dietitians offer a wide array of professional knowledge and experience in a variety of settings from clinical to community and public policy to media communications. When consulting with an RD, people can feel confident that the nutrition information they are receiving is accurate and credible," Sandquist says.
"While the term 'nutritionist' is used frequently, it is important to remember many states do not have licensure regulations for this term. Thus anyone can call themselves a 'nutritionist' without the appropriate qualifications. Fortunately Maryland does require a licensure to practice in the state. To check credentials contact the Board of Dietetic Practice at 410) 767-6500 or http://www.dhmh.maryland.gov/dietetic/SitePages/Home.aspx to verify qualifications. To locate an RD in your area consult the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics at www.eatright.org.

Celebrated each March, National Nutrition Month is a nutrition education and information campaign created to focus attention on the importance of making informed food and nutrition choices and developing sound eating and physical activity habits. Enjoy these creative recipes provided by the Academy.

**BAKED QUINOA RATATOUILLE (GLUTEN-FREE)**

1 tablespoon olive oil  
2 cloves garlic, minced  
1 red onion, thinly sliced  
14 1/2 – ounce can diced tomatoes with liquid (low-sodium may be used)  
2 tablespoons tomato paste  
1 teaspoon dried basil  
1/2 teaspoon dried oregano  
1/2 teaspoon dried thyme  
1 tablespoon chopped fresh parsley  
1 large eggplant (about 1 pound) cubed  
1 green pepper, thinly sliced  
2 zucchini squash, sliced  
1 cup cooked quinoa (cooked according to package instructions and rinsed, if necessary)  
3/4 cup shredded part-skim mozzarella cheese (or Italian cheese blend, if desired)

Preheat the oven to 375°F. Heat the olive oil in a large nonstick skillet over medium heat. Add the minced garlic and onion slices, and sauté for 5 minutes until softened. Stir in the diced tomatoes, tomato paste, basil, oregano, thyme and parsley. Continue to cook for 1 to 2 minutes. Remove from heat.

Layer half of the tomato and onion mixture in the bottom of a 9x13-inch baking dish. Top with all of the uncooked sliced and cubed vegetables, then add the remaining tomato and onion mixture. Spread the cooked quinoa on top and sprinkle with the shredded cheese. Cover with foil and bake for 40 to 45 minutes. Remove the foil for the last 5 minutes of cooking.

Makes 4 servings: approximately 1 1/4 cups. Nutrition Facts per Serving: Calories: 234 Fat: 8 g Cholesterol: 13.4 mg Sodium: 380 mg Carbohydrates: 31.4 g Fiber: 8.3 g Protein: 11 g

**Tips:** It’s helpful to buy pre-rinsed quinoa for convenience. If you don’t, you must rinse the quinoa several times before using it. Quinoa contains an outer coating of saponin that is very bitter. Use a fine colander and rinse the quinoa under cold water.
CHOCOLATE BANANA SWIRL (GLUTEN-FREE)

2 cups part-skim ricotta cheese
1 tablespoon cocoa powder
2 tablespoons confectioner’s sugar
2 tablespoons brown sugar
1 medium banana, sliced
1/2 teaspoon cinnamon (optional)

Mix together the ricotta cheese, cocoa powder, confectioner’s sugar and brown sugar until blended well. Taste the mixture and add extra sweetener if desired.

Separate the ricotta mixture into 4 individual dessert cups. Top with sliced banana, sprinkle with cinnamon and serve. Makes 4 servings: 1/4 of recipe. Nutrition Facts per Serving: Calories: 231 Fat: 10 g Cholesterol: 38 mg Sodium: 156 mg Carbohydrates: 22 g Fiber: 1.4 g Protein: 14.6 g Calcium: 344 mg Iron: < 1 mg

Tip: The ricotta mixture can be made without adding cocoa powder.

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