Quinoa Veggie and Lean Protein Bowl

For most of us, a healthy metabolism is possible. Both the timing and mix of what you eat greatly influences how well you perform and what your body uses for fuel. Eating at the right times with the right mix of nutrients and in the correct portions is the best strategy for a healthy metabolism.

Nothing slows down fat-burning or building muscle more than under-eating. When you go for long periods of time without eating, which usually happens with skipping meals, your body slows down its metabolism to conserve energy and may even start burning your muscles for energy. However, if you eat at consistent intervals throughout the day, your body gets the signal to burn at its peak and uses the foods you eat as its fuel source. A great start is to aim to always eat a protein rich breakfast comprised of 20-30 grams of protein. It is always best to refuel within 60 minutes of working out. Depending on the timing, this may be a snack or your next meal. Just be sure to consume some protein and carbohydrates like fruits or grains.

Many people get bogged down with a large variety of information related to the "ideal" mix of carbs, fats, and proteins for meal time. This information varies and can be confusing. For most people who aim to build a nutritious eating pattern, feel good, and manage weight, following the recommendations of MyPlate and choosing nutritious snacks are easy to follow and are successful strategies.

The key to building meals for optimal nutrition using the MyPlate proportions is to choose nutrient dense foods, most of the time, while filling the plate with fruits and vegetables. This means that most of your choices should be lean proteins, healthy fats, whole-grains, and skim milk. A key goal to aim for is to always have a source of healthy fat at each meal. Just remember, when building a healthy diet for optimal metabolism, do not eat excess calories—even if all of your food choices for meals and snacks are nutritious.

This meal features the "ancient grain," quinoa, which is loaded with fiber, and is a source of a complete protein that is plant based, which is rare because usually only animal sources provide complete protein. The added vegetables, lean meat, and healthy fat make this meal a great choice any time but also a great recovery meal after a workout, providing roughly 500 calories, 28-30 grams of protein, and 38-40 grams of carbs.

Directions:

Serves: 8

1) Using a large sized sauce pan, bring 2 1/2 cups of low sodium chicken broth and 2 cups of quinoa to a boil. Cover and then simmer for 10 minutes. Stir occasionally.

2) While the quinoa is simmering, in a large bowl combine, 1-15 oz. can of green beans (drained), 1-15 oz. can of whole kernel corn (drained), 10-15 cherry tomatoes (halved) and 16 oz. of chunked, cooked boneless chicken breast (leftover, canned, or rotisserie) or cooked turkey. Gently toss.

3) Once the quinoa is finished cooking, remove it from the pan and spread thinly on a clean baking sheet so it can cool quickly.

4) Mix together 6 tbsp. olive oil, 1tbsp. lemon juice, ¼ cup chopped parsley, 1tsp. minced garlic, and ¼ tsp. pepper.

5) Add the cooled quinoa to the vegetables and chicken. Drizzle the dressing over the mixture and gently toss.

6) Serve 1/8th of the mixture in a bowl alongside you favorite piece of fresh fruit or yogurt.

Tip:

Freeze the leftovers in single servings for a lunch or quick dinner.

This meal can be served cold or heated in the microwave.

The dressing in step 4, works great as a meat marinade, or can be cooked with meat for a unique flavor.

Use the dressing in Step 4 to top your favorite salads.