

'Irresistible' starch helps keep you cool and slim

By **Rachel Forrest**

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Just in time for the big summer barbecue and outdoor potluck season, I found out recently that all those chilled pasta and potato salads are not only cool (who wants to eat hot food in 95 degree weather? Not I.), but the heating and then cooling of the starch is good for you.

Pasta, potato, grain and bean salads contain something called "resistant starch," a natural ingredient that gives us dietary fiber, helps with calorie reduction and weight control (woohoo!) and helps keep our energy even.

The starch found in these foods increases when they're cooked and then cooled, so the orzo salad with black olives and peppers you're making for the big barbecue at the in-laws for the fourth of July is better chilled the next day than if you served it hot that day.

This resistant starch gets its name from its ability to resist digestion in the small intestine and pass through to the large intestine where it acts like dietary fiber. So, foods with high resistant starch yield a slow but steady energy and promote digestive health. It's quite like fiber.

And there are four kinds of RS — a physically inaccessible or digestible resistant starch, like that found in seeds, legumes and unprocessed whole grains, the RS that's found in uncooked potato, green banana flour and high amylose corn (like Hi-maize), the summer salad RS formed when the foods are cooked and cooled and chemically modified resistant starches, not found in nature.

Other benefits of RS? Bacteria ferments these starches in the colon, thus increasing a fatty acid with anti-cancer properties. If used to replace flour, it lowers the insulin impact of foods. It balances energy after a meal. It lowers the caloric density of foods. It might increase immune function and it may reduce the risk of cardiovascular disease. And it tastes good in the foods you're going to bring to the summer parties by the beach.

I got these recipes from Oldways — Food Advocates for Better Eating and Drinking, headquartered in Boston. They have a great book out called "The Oldways Table," but these are from various sources. The first recipe features resistant-starch-rich potatoes, the second gets its resistant starch from both chickpeas and grains, and the third recipe includes both natural sources of resistant starch along with Hi-maize, a powdered form of natural resistant starch from corn that can be added to many dishes without altering taste or texture.

Sautéed Green Beans and Potatoes with Rosemary and Lemon Zest (U.S. Potato Board)

Take one pound of red potatoes and simmer until tender. Drain and cool. Quarter lengthwise. Set aside. Heat $\frac{1}{4}$ cup olive oil and add 1 tablespoon chopped garlic. Cook for 30 seconds. Add $1\frac{1}{2}$ tablespoons chopped rosemary, 1 teaspoon grated lemon zest and $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon chili flakes and cook until the aroma wafts up to your nose. Add potatoes and one pound of green beans trimmed and blanched. Sauté until veggies are hot and coated with the seasonings. Sprinkle with 2 teaspoons lemon juice and salt to taste. Serve warm or chilled.

Chickpea and Cranberry couscous salad (from Pulse Canada)

Combine $2\frac{1}{2}$ cups chicken stock, 1 cup water, $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon tumeric, $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon ginger and $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon cinnamon in a large saucepan and bring to a boil. Remove from heat. Stir in two cups couscous, cover and let stand for five minutes or until liquid has been absorbed.

Transfer to large bowl and let cool to room temperature. Break up any couscous lumps with fingers. (Note: you can substitute any other grain, such as rice.

Follow cooking directions for grain chosen.) Sauté one medium diced zucchini, two peeled and diced carrots and three chopped green onions in 1 tablespoon of olive oil. Add sautéed vegetables to couscous. Stir in one cup dried cranberries and two cups cooked chickpeas.

Whisk together $\frac{1}{4}$ cup lemon juice, $\frac{1}{4}$ cup olive oil, $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon salt and $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon cayenne pepper in a small bowl. Pour over couscous and toss together. Cover and refrigerate for at least one hour or overnight. Garnish with chopped parsley before serving.

Layered Roasted Vegetable Salad (from Hi-maize Resistant Starch)

Slice two sweet red peppers into $\frac{1}{4}$ -inch slices, discarding seeds, stem, and membrane. Slice two medium zucchini into $\frac{1}{4}$ -inch slices as well. Peel skin from one large eggplant and one cup potato and slice into $\frac{1}{4}$ -inch pieces.

Sauté or grill red peppers, eggplant, zucchini and sweet potato until tender. Slice three Roma tomatoes into $\frac{1}{4}$ -inch slices and sauté (or grill) until slightly softened. Combine 3 tablespoons olive oil, 1 tablespoon balsamic vinegar, $\frac{1}{2}$ cup mixed fresh herbs of your choice and $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon salt, then set aside. Combine 2 tablespoons Hi-maize resistant starch (in most supermarkets) and $\frac{1}{2}$ cup ricotta cheese.

Stack all the vegetables on a serving plate. Top with the ricotta then drizzle the oil and vinegar dressing over the ricotta and vegetables. Sprinkle with $\frac{1}{4}$ cup roasted pine nuts.

Rachel Forrest is a former restaurant owner who lives in Exeter. Her column appears Wednesdays in iT. Her restaurant review column, Dining Out, appears Thursdays in Spotlight magazine. Hear her on

Wine Me Dine Me with co-host Susan Tuveson at 6 p.m., Fridays on WSCA-FM 106.1. She can be reached by e-mail at rachelforrest1@aol.com.

The Dish

Check out food writer Kathy Gunst's new blog! It's on Down East Magazine's new and improved Web page. Check it out at www.downeast.com and click on "Notes from a Maine Kitchen." There are about three blogs of hers up there right now: Palates and Palettes (about dinner at the White Barn Inn), Ramp Up the Flavor (about spring ramps) and Is That Green I See (about chives with a great muffin recipe). Send her your comments and ideas!