

Cooperative Extension

How to Sneak Nutrition Into Your Meals

Sara Elnakib, RD, MPH, CHES, FCHS Educator, Passaic County



Ever wonder how kidney and steak pie became a comfort food in the 1940s? The truth was revealed to me as I was shuffling through Charles Duhigg’s book, *The Power of Habit*. He wrote about how during World War 2 most of the animal meat was going to soldiers in Europe and it affected how Americans ate. At the time meat was so scarce that restaurants in NYC were using horsemeat for burgers and there was a black market for poultry. Despite the lack of filet mignon and rib eye steaks there was another perfectly good source of protein that was still plentiful in the country – organ meats. So the US government created The Committee on Food Habits to help find ways to convince American housewives to use liver, kidneys and brain instead of beef ribs and flanks in their recipes. The committee found that the best way to create a demand for organ meats was to rename it “variety meats” and disguise it in familiar foods. Pamphlets in the 1940s highlighted how kidney in steak pie can give it delicious texture and how liver in meatloaf could be your “secret ingredient” and before they knew it variety meats were flying off the shelves. Even today many people enjoy comfort foods made with organ meats. This was one of the most successful interventions to change the nation’s food habits to date. The reason why it was so successful was because people didn’t feel like they were giving anything up. They didn’t have to adjust to eating differently, they just kept eating their steak pie and slowly grew to enjoy the kidney that was hidden in it.

We can draw from this example to find ways to help our family eat more fruits and vegetables in everyday meals. There are two philosophies when it comes to eating more fruits and vegetables. One group will tell you to sneak fruits and vegetables in meals to get them past your kids. The other group insists that kids should eat their fruits and vegetables raw or simply cooked to acquire their taste and learn to love them. As a mom of a very picky eater, I enjoy the liberty to adhere to both philosophies. I offer my son fresh fruits and vegetables at every meal in a variety of different preparations and textures, to keep it interesting, but at the same time I ramp up my meals with extra nutrition I hide from him. That way on the day he refuses to eat the Brussels sprouts, I know he’s having squash in his Mac & Cheese and I don’t have to worry about him not getting enough vegetables.

Today, I am going to focus on the philosophy of sneaking in nutrition. Keep reading for tips on getting your kids to eat more fruit and vegetables the old fashioned way. Here are some ideas you can use to ramp up your recipes and make really nutritious meals:

Vegetable broth not Water: I use vegetable broth instead of plain water when making rice, barley, or quinoa. The nutrients let out by the vegetable during boiling can give your side dish a keen edge while barely altering the taste. The trick is to use vegetable broth that doesn’t contain parsnips or turnips. Those vegetables are very strong and will overpower the taste of anything you make. (Trust me, I learned that the hard way)

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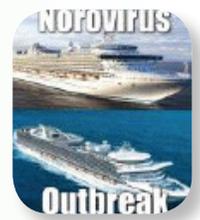
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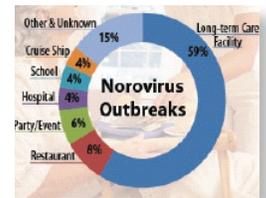
Norovirus Outbreaks:

What you Need to Know on that Cruise

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Norovirus is a highly contagious virus with a short incubation period (~12-48 hours) and represents an increased risk to the elderly, young children and the immunocompromised. Victims experience flu-like symptoms, which include nausea, abdominal cramps, vomiting and diarrhea. Experts estimate that more than 50 percent of global vomiting and diarrhea is due to Norovirus, averaging about 20 million cases annually in the United States alone.



Cruise ships are frequently linked to Norovirus outbreaks in the news media. Cruise ships are at a high risk for spreading the illness because close quarters allow the virus to spread rapidly. Outbreaks that occur on cruise ships are also more likely to make the news because cruise ships are required to report any occurrence of illness as part of the US Vessel Sanitation Program. The Vessel Sanitation Program also carries out sanitation inspections, and provides public health training and education to the cruise ship industry, state and local health authorities, public health professionals, the media and those who are travelling.

When a cruise ship recognizes passengers with Norovirus symptoms, the ill passengers are quarantined to prevent the spread of the illness to others. If outbreaks cannot be contained, cruise lines may dock at the nearest port or return to their home port for a more thorough sanitization of the vessel. Actions to prevent the spread of Norovirus on cruise ships include educating the crew and ensuring that an effective sanitation procedure is being consistently followed. Elimination of self-serve buffets and education of passengers regarding proper hand washing also help control Norovirus risk on cruise ships.



Norovirus can be spread through contaminated food and water, along with airborne virus particles in vomit. Norovirus is most commonly spread through direct contact with an ill person or via the objects or surfaces an infected person

has touched. Direct contact can include shaking hands with someone who is sick, caring for someone who is sick or sharing drinks or utensils. Norovirus survives on surfaces for weeks and some disinfectants are less effective in eliminating the virus. Foods normally associated with Norovirus include raw fruits and vegetables, as well as undercooked or raw shellfish.

Cruise ships are not the primary location where people contract Norovirus infection. Long-term care facilities (nursing homes) have by far the highest reported incidence of Norovirus outbreaks compared to other locations like restaurants, schools, cruise ships or other locations. Illnesses tend to be more severe in nursing home patients compared to otherwise healthy adults.

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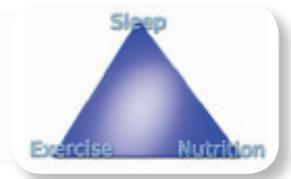
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Sleep Health: A New Topic of Importance

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Adequate sleep and the treatment of sleep disorders will improve a person's health, productivity, wellness, quality of life, and safety on roads and in the workplace. Up until the last few years, sleep was not related to many chronic illnesses and quality of life. Now we have the research to indicate how important this topic is for Americans.

Poor sleep health is a common problem with 25 percent of U.S. adults reporting insufficient sleep or rest at least 15 out of every 30 days. The public health burden of chronic sleep loss and sleep disorders, coupled with a low awareness of poor sleep health habits among the general population, health care professionals, and policymakers, creates the need for a well-coordinated strategy to help consumers improve their sleep-related health.

Why Is Sleep Health Important? Sleep, like nutrition and physical activity, is a critical factor in determining our health and well-being. Sleep is a basic requirement for healthy infants, children, and adolescents. Sleep loss and untreated sleep disorders influence basic patterns of behavior that negatively affect family health and interpersonal relationships. Fatigue and sleepiness can reduce productivity and increase the chance for mishaps such as medical errors and motor vehicle or industrial accidents.

Adequate sleep is necessary to: (1) Fight off infection (2) Support the metabolism of sugar to prevent diabetes (3) Perform well in school (4) Work effectively and safely. Sleep timing and duration affect a number of endocrine, metabolic, and neurological functions that are critical to the maintenance of individual health. If left untreated, sleep disorders and chronic short sleep are associated with an increased risk of: heart disease, high blood pressure, obesity, diabetes, injury on-the-job and respiratory diseases.

Sleep health is a particular concern for individuals with chronic disabilities and disorders such as arthritis, kidney disease, pain, human immunodeficiency virus (HIV), epilepsy, Parkinson's disease, and depression. Among older adults, the cognitive and medical consequences of untreated sleep disorders decrease health-related quality of life, contribute to functional limitations and loss of independence, and are associated with an increased risk of death from any cause.

Understanding Sleep Health: The odds of being a short sleeper (defined as someone who sleeps less than 6 hours a night) in the United States have increased significantly over the past 30 years. Competition between sleep schedules, employment, and lifestyle is a recent trend. Intermittent sleep disturbances due to lifestyle choices are associated with temporary fatigue, disorientation, and decreased alertness.

Sleep-disordered breathing (SDB), which includes sleep apnea, is another serious threat to health. SDB is characterized by intermittent airway obstruction or pauses in breathing. People with untreated SDB have 2 to 3 times the risk of heart attack and stroke. Obesity is a significant risk factor for SDB, and weight loss is associated with a decrease in SDB severity.

Sleep-Disordered Breathing in Children: African American children are at least twice as likely to develop SDB than children of European descent. The risk of SDB during childhood is associated with low income levels and is independent of overweight and other health risk factors. Left untreated, SDB in children is associated with difficulties in school, metabolic disorders, and future heart disease risk.

Sleep-Disordered Breathing in Adults: SDB may affect 20 to 40 percent of older adults and, if left untreated, is associated with a 2 to 3 fold increased risk of stroke and mortality. Health education programs can increase awareness of common sleep disorders, such as insomnia, restless leg syndrome, and SDB. Sleep health education programs in workplaces can promote better work schedule patterns and motivate managers and workers to adopt strategies that reduce risks to health and safety. Without the knowledge of sleep research, individuals often prioritize other activities over sleep and accept constant sleepiness and sleep disruption as normal behavior.

Make sure you get enough sleep each day. Remember, a good night's sleep is important for your mind and body. Most adults need 7 to 8 hours of sleep each night.

Preventing Osteoporosis Through Diet

Natalia Gekhtman, *Dietetic Intern, College of St. Elizabeth and Daryl Minch, FCHS Educator, Somerset County*



Osteoporosis, a disease causing brittle bones, is a major public health issue. Osteoporosis can lower the quality of life for many older adults by causing broken bones, pain, and limiting mobility. Fortunately, a healthy diet throughout life can protect our bones. A healthy balanced diet includes a variety of fruits and vegetables; grains, especially whole grains, such as pasta, rice, bread, and cereal; protein foods such as poultry, lean meats, seafood and beans, and low-fat milk and dairy products.

Key nutrients for bone health:

- **Calcium is critical for forming bones.** Milk and dairy products are the best dietary sources of calcium. Canned sardines and salmon, when you eat the bones, are also a great source of calcium. Some dark green vegetables, like collard greens, kale, mustard greens and broccoli, contain a good amount of calcium too. Finally, there are calcium - fortified foods and beverages, such as orange juice, almond or soy milk, tofu and cereals. These are helpful for people allergic to milk or who are lactose intolerant. To learn how easily you can include more calcium in your diet without adding much fat, see the Selected Calcium-Rich Foods listed on page 5.
- **Vitamin D helps our body absorb calcium.** The best dietary sources of Vitamin D are fatty fish (such as salmon, tuna and mackerel) and fish liver oil. Small amounts of the vitamin can be found in beef liver, cheese and egg yolks. Foods with added Vitamin D - like milk, dairy products and juices - also provide a good amount of this vitamin.
- **Phosphorus is also important for forming bones.** Foods high in phosphorus are poultry, fish, meat, milk, eggs, grains, and legumes.
- **Magnesium is another mineral involved in bone formation.** Dietary sources of magnesium are fruits, vegetables, legumes, nuts, grains, fish and dairy products.
- **Vitamin K improves bone health and reduces the risk of fracture.** Dark green leafy vegetables, like spinach, kale and broccoli, are the main sources of Vitamin K. Animal meats and fermented foods are also good sources.
- **Vitamin C plays an important role in forming collagen which helps maintain bone.** Various fruits and vegetables, like citrus fruits, kiwi, peppers, tomatoes, and green leafy vegetables, are high in vitamin C.

Other dietary considerations include:

- **A diet low or too high in protein intake can cause bone loss.**
- **Reduce sodium intake to less than 2,300 mg per day.** High sodium diets may increase calcium excretion.
- **Drink less soda, if any.** Some sodas contain phosphoric acid which can reduce the amount of Vitamin D and calcium available to the body.
- **Consult your health care professional about taking calcium and Vitamin D supplements;** especially if you don't eat foods high in calcium. For more information, download the Dietary Supplements fact sheets at National Institute of Health Office of Dietary Supplements.

Another key to osteoporosis prevention is to be physically active. Weight-bearing exercises such as walking and resistance exercises like lifting weights can help maintain bone strength. Include weight-bearing activities several times a week.

Recommended Calcium Intakes	
Life-stage group	mg/day
Infants 0 to 6 months	200
Infants 6 to 12 months	260
1 to 3 years old	700
4 to 8 years old	1,000
9 to 13 years old	1,300
14 to 18 years old	1,300
19 to 30 years old	1,000
31 to 50 years old	1,000
51- to 70-year-old males	1,000
51- to 70-year-old females	1,200
70 years old	1,200
14 to 18 years old, pregnant/lactating	1,300
19 to 50 years old, pregnant/lactating	1,000

Source: Food and Nutrition Board, Institute of Medicine, National Academy of Sciences, 2010.

continued on page 5

Selected Calcium-Rich Foods	
Food	Calcium (mg)
Fortified oatmeal, 1 packet	350
Sardines, canned in oil, with edible bones, 3 oz.	324
Cheddar cheese, 1½ oz. shredded	306
Milk, nonfat, 1 cup	302
Milkshake, 1 cup	300
Yogurt, plain, low-fat, 1 cup	300
Soybeans, cooked, 1 cup	261
Tofu, firm, with calcium, ½ cup	204
Orange juice, fortified with calcium, 6 oz.	200–260 (varies)
Salmon, canned, with edible bones, 3 oz.	181
Pudding, instant (chocolate, banana, etc.) made with 2% milk, ½ cup	153
Baked beans, 1 cup	142
Cottage cheese, 1% milk fat, 1 cup	138
Spaghetti, lasagna, 1 cup	125
Frozen yogurt, vanilla, soft-serve, ½ cup	103
Ready-to-eat cereal, fortified with calcium, 1 cup	100–1,000 (varies)
Cheese pizza, 1 slice	100
Fortified waffles, 2	100
Turnip greens, boiled, ½ cup	99
Broccoli, raw, 1 cup	90
Ice cream, vanilla, ½ cup	85
Soy or rice milk, fortified with calcium, 1 cup	80–500 (varies)

Source: *The 2004 Surgeon General's Report on Bone Health and Osteoporosis: What It Means to You*. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office of the Surgeon General, 2004, pages 12–13.



Build a Better Bagged School Lunch

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When it comes to building a bagged lunch for their children, many parents struggle to find the right balance of convenience and nutrition. It may be easier to rely on pre-packaged, processed convenience foods. But, many of these products are high in sodium, saturated fat, and trans fat, and low in the vital nutrients children need to grow into healthy, strong adults, including calcium, fiber, and Vitamins C and A. The good news is that there are plenty of easy, affordable, and nutritious foods you can prepare at home for your child's bagged lunch.



Lunch is an important part of a child's school day for a number of reasons. Research shows that students with healthy diets tend to perform better on standardized tests and throughout the academic day. Outside of school performance, eating a healthy diet helps maintain a healthy weight, which reduces risk for chronic diseases like obesity, cardiovascular disease and diabetes.



The MyPlate icon is a familiar image for people of every age, making it easy to follow and understand. The diagram depicts the proportions of each food group consumers should eat at every meal. To meet these guidelines, aim to pack a lunch that makes half of your child's "plate" fruits and vegetables, one quarter grains, and one quarter lean protein. By following the MyPlate diagram when packing your child's lunch, you will ensure that your child is meeting the recommended nutrition goals set by the Dietary Guidelines for Americans. Give these tips a try to get started and help you build a better packed lunch:



Fruits:

- **Apple slices with nut butter and granola** – apples sliced and spread with nut butter, such as peanut or almond, and sprinkled with granola are a great source of vitamin C, protein, fiber, and healthy fats which will keep your student focused all day!
- **Fruit salad** – Mix fresh cut fruit together for a delicious salad, and serve plain or topped with low-fat fruit-flavored vinaigrette.
- **Dried fruit** – Convenient and shelf-stable, dried fruit pairs well with yogurt, cottage cheese, and oatmeal and makes a sweet and healthy snack for your child. Just be sure to look for low-sugar brands!

Vegetables:

- **Edamame** – A healthy kid favorite! Children love to "pop" the edamame beans out of their pods, but they are also available ready-to-eat!
- **"Shake and Serve" Salads** – Pack salad components, such as lettuce, diced vegetables, and lean protein, in a bag or sealed container with dressing on the side, so your child can "shake" the salad to dress it themselves!
- **Filler veggies** – Mix grated or diced vegetables into any sandwich. Grated carrots, zucchini, and celery are delicious, healthy options. Don't forget fresh spinach, lettuce and tomatoes as "toppers"!

Grains:

- **Walking salads** – For fresh salad with a twist, try wrapping up your student's favorite salad toppings and vegetables into a whole wheat tortilla. Top with low-fat shredded cheese and guacamole or light dressing for added flavor.
- **Pasta Salads** – Use your leftover whole grain pasta from weekday dinners! Mix fun shapes, like wagon wheels or spirals, with fresh cut vegetables and light dressing for a healthy lunch entrée.

Protein:

- **Black Bean Wrap** – Black beans are a great source of protein. Wrap them up in a whole wheat tortilla with salsa, guacamole, and low-fat cheese for a delicious lunch for your child.
- **Turkey, Bacon & Jam Wrap** – Combine lean turkey with low-sugar jam and a sprinkle of bacon bits for a sweet and salty taste that kids love!

Dairy:

- **Yogurt** – Yogurt is a delicious dairy source, but be careful when selecting kid's varieties! Always be sure you opt for brands with less than 13 grams of sugar!
- **Pudding** – Low-fat puddings are a great lunch snack that kids love. Look for brands that are lower in added sugar, preferably less than 13 grams, as an occasional sweet treat.

For more information and delicious, healthy bagged lunch ideas for your child, be sure to check out the Rutgers Cooperative Extension Fact Sheet, Build A Better...Bagged School Lunch #FS1242 at <http://njaes.rutgers.edu/pubs/fs1242/>

Ten Kitchen Tools for Fast Food Preparation

Daryl Minch, FCHS Educator, Somerset County



I like to cook and I like to get meals on the table fast. These kitchen tools save time and simplify food prep. The criteria for my top ten list: easy to use, frequent or multiple uses for the tool, takes up little space; easy to clean and not expensive. I use many of these tools several times a week. I encourage you to compare brands for each tool for price, durability and functionality. FCHS does not endorse specific brands.

- 1. Instant read thermometer:** The essential tool of every master chef! Use for meat, poultry, mixed dishes and other foods to be sure the food is thoroughly cooked to a safe temperature and not overcooked. Models include dial or digital readings. Be sure to clean between each use. Instant read thermometers are usually not oven safe. Purchase an oven safe thermometer if you like to keep one in a roast or turkey while roasting.
- 2. Garlic press:** Mince garlic in a flash with this tool. Pick a sturdy design to handle a large clove or several small ones. Built in prongs to clean the tiny holes is a plus or use a clean, repurposed toothbrush.
- 3. Hand-held grater:** Grate hard cheese onto pasta (even at the table), ginger or garlic for a stir-fry or chocolate for a garnish. It takes up no space! Be careful grating and cleaning as the blades are sharp. I prefer a wider paddle design, while others prefer the narrow stick style. The hole sizes vary for different uses; choose the size that you use most often. I find coarse holes perfect for grating Romano cheese.
- 4. Zester:** Easier to use and clean than a grater for removing zest without the white pith from lemons and limes. **Tip: Freeze extra zest in small bags or in ice cubes.**
- 5. Small wire mesh strainer:** Rinse portion size servings of berries for cereal, strain fat from ground poultry or meat, strain solids from pan drippings for gravy, sift small amounts of flour, sprinkle powdered sugar and more.
- 6. Veggie peeler:** Find a style that is comfortable to hold. It makes a difference when you have a pound of potatoes or carrots to peel. Using the appropriate tool also offers better control for those with arthritis or weakness in their hands or when hands are wet. Look for non-slip rubber or silicone cushioning. Peelers do not stay sharp forever; either sharpen or replace for more efficient peeling.
- 7. Small cutting board:** Why take out a large board for one onion or tomato? Go for dishwasher safe plastic. Cutting boards protect counter tops and keep knife edges sharp. Use the board for serving cheese at your next party.
- 8. Kitchen scissors:** Mince herbs in a cup, cut green onion and chives, cut-up chicken and remove skin, trim edges of pie dough and more. Look for strong blades that come apart for easy cleaning.
- 9. Silicone spatula:** These are flexible for mixing batters and safe to use at high temperatures, such as cooking an omelet. They also go in the dishwasher. I love the bright colors. Get at least two – one standard size and a skinny one (good for getting that last drop out of a jar).
- 10. Julienne peeler:** This tool makes short, skinny strings of veggies in a flash. Try carrots, zucchini, beets, or jicama. The strings are perfect for salads, omelets and garnishes. Add the strings near the end of a stir-fry or soup or put on top of fish or chicken cooked “en papillote” (enclosed in a packet of parchment paper or foil and then cooked in the oven). Most veggie strings cook quickly. If you want long spaghetti-like strings, you’ll need a different tool such as a Veggetti spiral tool. It’s hard to get long strands with the peeler.



Share your favorite tools for speedy cooking on our [Get Moving - Get Healthy NJ Facebook](#) page.

<http://www.facebook.com/Get-Moving-Get-Healthy-New-Jersey>.

Most of all have fun cooking.



Cauliflower Mashed Potatoes: When making mashed potatoes you can steam cauliflower and add it to your potatoes as you're mashing them. Using a food mill will ensure all your vegetables come out the same consistency; a blender or food processor may work just as well. It will boost your plain potatoes to give them anti-inflammatory nutrients like Vitamin K and antioxidants like Vitamin C.

Beans in the Beef: I always add black beans to my ground beef. I started with half a can of black beans to every two pounds of ground beef just to get my family used to the taste. Now I usually use one can of black beans to each pound of ground beef, I season it very well and none is the wiser about what's in the beef. Beans are chock full of nutrients like fiber, protein and lots of vitamins that contribute to heart health and protect against diabetes.

Veggie filled Tomato Sauce: I never make plain pasta and tomato sauce. I fill my tomato sauce with different color peppers, olives, spinach and capers to make a Mediterranean sauce. Sometimes I use zucchini, squash, and fresh tomatoes to make a Provençal style pasta dish. Sometimes I just chop up steamed broccoli into really small pieces and toss it in with my pasta sauce. Experiment with different flavors, but whatever you do: Never serve plain tomato sauce! Tomato has such a strong flavor it can be an excellent vehicle to give your kids an extra boost of nutrition without them noticing.

Squash in Mac & Cheese: I made this dish in my senior year of school to ace one of my nutrition classes. The first time I experimented with different orange vegetables. I made carrot Mac & Cheese, pumpkin Mac & Cheese and squash Mac & Cheese. The winner of the taste test was Squash Mac & Cheese and I still make it to this day. Squash is full of Vitamin A, Vitamin C, Fiber and Magnesium; it's an excellent food to cover with the cheesy goodness of low fat cheese.

Zucchini in Muffins: We all know of zucchini bread and it's not uncommon to see zucchini hidden in different baked goods. It has such a delicate taste that it's easy to mask with some honey or sugar. Zucchini will give your muffin a boost of antioxidants and cancer preventing nutrients like folate.

Tomato Juice in Devil's Food Cake: Only the decadence of chocolate can mask the strong taste of tomato. Adding tomato juice as the liquid instead of water will not only give your devil's food cake an angelic hue it will give your kids a strong immune system with potassium, magnesium, iron and phosphorus.

Applesauce in Cake: Found in the pages of the old Registered Dietitian's cookbook. Registered Dietitians have been substituting applesauce for the oil and eggs in cake mixes for years. Adding 1 cup of applesauce without added sugar and 1 box of a cake mix, makes a scrumptious guilt free treat. (Some people use fat free Greek yogurt instead of applesauce and it also makes a delicious cake with a lot more protein.) If you are making your cake from scratch, substitute 1 cup of apple sauce for 1 cup of sugar.

Bananas in Cookies: I recently tried an oatmeal cookie made with banana instead of oil and eggs and it was delicious. The only problem was because the banana oxidizes, the cookies got very dark after only 30 minutes of sitting on the table. I make these when I know I am having lots of kids coming over and they will all be devoured as soon as they come out of the oven.

Try these fun ways to hide your fruits and vegetables and tell me what you think! Email me at elnakib@njaes.rutgers.edu to share your stories, tips and tricks.

Healthy Mac & Cheese

Cooking Spray

1 pound of elbow macaroni (Barilla Plus)

2 cups of 1% milk

2 (12 ounce) packs of pureed frozen squash

2 tsp Salt

2 tsp of Dry Mustard

¼ tsp Cayenne Pepper

1/8 tsp Fresh ground pepper

2 cups (about 8 ounces) of grated Gruyere

2 cups (about 8 ounces) grated extra sharp cheddar

½ cup of Panko (or bread crumbs)

- Preheat oven to 350 degrees F.
- Spray 9x13 inch baking dish with cooking spray.
- Cook elbow macaroni using instructions on the box.
- Heat milk and squash in a large sauce pan on medium to low heat. Stir occasionally.
- Once squash has thawed and is incorporated with the milk, turn off the heat and add salt, mustard, cayenne pepper and ground pepper. Stir well.
- Add grated cheese mixture to the squash and milk, heat on the stove until cheese is incorporated.
- Pour cheese mixture over macaroni and mix to combine. Transfer into baking dish.
- Sprinkle Panko over the top of the macaroni and spray with cooking spray.
- Bake for 20 minutes and broil on high for 2 minutes or until crispy and brown.