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Lighter Lasagna

This vegetarian entrée has all the robust flavor and texture of traditional lasagna without the fat and calories. Eggplant, a good source of fiber along with some vitamin B6, works like pasta to define the layers. Marinara and spinach add deep color and important nutrients like folate, vitamins A and C and cancer-fighting carotenoids. Adding a meatless meal to your week can help lower your cancer risk too. Research has shown that limiting red meat and eating foods containing fiber can help lower your risk for colorectal cancer.

Eggplant, Tomato and Cheese Casserole

Olive oil cooking spray
2 medium eggplants, washed, ends cut off (do not peel)
2 tsp. dried oregano
1 (16-oz.) jar reduced-sodium chunky marinara sauce
2 Tbsp. chopped fresh basil, divided
2 cups cooked spinach
3/4 cup shredded Fontina cheese (Gouda, Gruyère, or Monterrey Jack may be substituted)
Black pepper and salt (optional)
2 Tbsp. freshly grated Parmesan cheese

Preheat oven to 375 degrees.

Bring large pot of water to boil. Spray 7 x 11 baking dish with cooking spray and set aside.

Slice eggplant lengthwise in very thin slices, about 1/4 inch each. Add to boiling water with a quick stir. Eggplant slices will float to top; push down into water. Cook for about 2 minutes from when it starts to boil again. Drain and set aside.

Mix oregano into marinara sauce and spoon 1/4 cup sauce onto bottom of baking dish. Place a layer of eggplant slices, as you would pasta, on bottom of dish. Cover eggplant layer with more tomato sauce, some basil, a layer of spinach, and then sprinkle some fontina cheese on top. Sprinkle with salt and pepper if desired. Continue to layer eggplant, sauce, basil, spinach and cheese until you reach almost the top of baking dish. The last layer should finish with both Fontina and Parmesan cheese.

Cover baking dish with parchment paper and then aluminum foil and bake for about 35-40 minutes.* Test with knife for doneness. If knife can be inserted with no resistance, uncover, and bake for additional 15 minutes until top is golden and bubbly. Remove from oven. Let rest for 10 minutes and garnish with remaining basil.

Makes 8 servings.

Per serving: 150 calories, 7 g total fat (2.5 g saturated fat), 19 g carbohydrate, 7 g protein, 7 g dietary fiber, 151 mg sodium.