

Go Fish!

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For years, heart disease has been the number one killer in the United States. Heart disease silently claims one American life every minute. In 2009, it was estimated that 785,000 Americans had a new heart attack and 470,000 had a recurrent attack. However, much can be done to prevent heart disease, and it can be as easy as adding fish to your diet.

What makes fish such a heart-nourishing food? A good source of protein and important nutrients, fish is also low in saturated fat. Omega 3 fatty acids, which are abundant in fatty fish (for example, salmon and tuna), have been shown to reduce risks for heart disease in a number of studies.

To benefit from the cardio protective effects of fish, the American Heart Association recommends eating fish, particularly fatty fish, at least twice a week. Common fatty fish rich in omega 3 fatty acids include salmon, herring, mackerel, sardines, trout and albacore tuna.

Although some consumers may worry about mercury levels, the United States Food and Drug Administration and the Environmental Protection Agency jointly report that fish and shellfish are important parts of a healthy and balanced diet, and for most people, research indicates that mercury from fish consumption should not be a health concern.

Specific population groups, including young children, pregnant women and nursing mothers, should avoid fish with high levels of mercury (for example, shark, tilefish, king mackerel and swordfish) due to potential harm to the developing nervous system of an unborn baby or a young child. Still, it is recommended that these groups eat up to 12 ounces of "low-mercury" fish per week for their nutritional benefits. Common fish that are low in mercury are canned light tuna, salmon, catfish, shrimp, pollock, cod and herring.

TUNA FOR TWO

2 tuna fillets, 4 ounces each
1 1/2 Tablespoons fresh bread crumbs
2 1/4 teaspoons thyme, dried 2 teaspoons fresh parsley, minced
1 1/2 teaspoons fresh basil, minced
1/4 teaspoon salt or salt substitute
1/8 teaspoon white pepper
2 teaspoons olive oil

Preheat oven to 375°.
Combine bread crumbs, thyme, parsley, basil, salt and pepper.
Brush fillets lightly with olive oil. Coat fillets with bread crumb mixture.
Bake for 10 to 20 minutes, or until fillets reach 145°.
Brown in broiler, if desired.

NUTRITIONAL INFORMATION (per 4 ounce serving)

252 calories; 27 gm protein; 11 gm fat; 10 gm carbohydrate; 1 gm fiber; 42 mg cholesterol; 339 mg sodium; 68 mg calcium.

BY SALLY SABAN, MS

Tips for healthy cooking of fish and a heart-healthy recipe: Bake, grill, steam, or broil, instead of breading and frying your fish. Remove the skin from fish before cooking to reduce exposure to mercury.