

February Nutrition Newsletter

Tips for a Heart-Healthy Valentine's Day

Your sweetheart may have the key to your heart, but a proper diet and regular physical activity can be the key to a healthy heart. This Valentine's Day, indulge your sweetheart with healthy treats made with love. If your child is having a Valentine's Day party at their school, it may be difficult to figure out what treats to bring with concerns about allergies in the classroom. If homemade goodies are banned, opt for these DIY gifts and goodies instead of pre-packaged sweets that tend to be higher in added sugar. Using a sharpie, write fun messages on the peels of fruit (ex. "Hi Cutie!" on a clementine or "I'm bananas for you!" on a banana). Serve strawberries with a dollop of whipped cream; for some added antioxidants include dark chocolate chips). For a healthy take on a banana split, try toppings like low-fat vanilla Greek yogurt, fruit, and nuts. Provide cookie cutters for kids to create heart-shaped nut butter and jelly sandwiches on whole wheat bread. Have your child bring stickers to hand out to their classmates as a token of their affection. Celebrate with fruits that are red! Let the kids make their own XOXO trail mix, using cheerios for the "Os" and pretzel sticks for the "Xs" mixed with dried cranberries. What healthy Valentine's Day party treats will make your heart skip a beat? For more info, visit: <https://www.eatright.org/health/lifestyle/holidays/9-candy-free-ideas-for-valentines-day-classroom-parties>.

Pecans

Florida produces five to ten million pounds of pecans annually. In Florida, pecan trees can be found in all regions between Pensacola and Miami. Most of the total acreage (8,500 acres) is located in Northern Florida because nut production is more optimal here thanks to colder winters compared to South Florida. Pecans are the only nut native to the United States. Pecan harvest season begins in September/October. Pecans provide healthy fats, primarily monounsaturated and polyunsaturated, fiber, protein, thiamin, zinc, copper, manganese, and phytochemicals. They are a delicious way for people to consume heart-healthy nutrients. Enjoy the rich, buttery texture and naturally sweet taste of these nutrient-dense nuts.

Banana Pecan Cherry Oatmeal

Time: 10 mins. Yield: 2 servings.

Ingredients:

- 1 cup old fashioned oats
- 2 cups water
- 1 banana, sliced
- 1/4 cup pecan halves
- 1/4 cup dried tart cherries
- 1/4 cup honey

Instructions:

1. Place oats and water in a large microwave safe bowl. Microwave on high for 3 to 4 minutes or until oats are cooked through. Watch carefully to avoid boiling over.
2. Remove from microwave, stir, and divide between two bowls.
3. Divide sliced banana, pecan halves, and dried tart cherries between the two bowls. Drizzle each bowl with 2 tablespoons of honey and serve immediately.

Adapted from: <https://americanpecan.com/recipes/breakfast/banana-pecan-cherry-oatmeal/>

