

Spring Into Flavor: Start Cooking Healthy

By Chef Asata
Metro Contributing Writer

It's that time of year when the early crops start to show up at the market. I love eating food when it's in season because not only is it at the peak of freshness

and flavor, it's nutritionally dense and it's cheap and plentiful.

As we round the corner into spring we can look for these fruits and vegetables to come from our local farmers and produce stands, and we can look for

the grocery store prices to drop on these foods as well: asparagus, lettuce, english peas, Vidalia onions, strawberries, turnips, and kale.

As April turns to May, even more produce will come to market. This is a

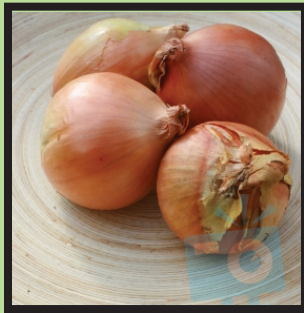
very exciting time of year to fill your New Years resolution to eat better. Here's a recipe to help get you started.

Do you have questions about cooking and eating healthy? Email Chef Asata at lifechef@gmail.com

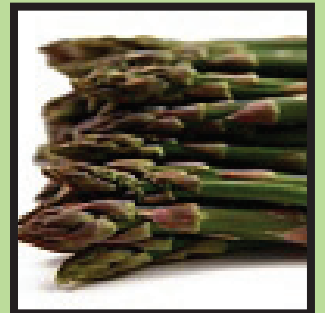
Chef Asata Reid created Life Chef LLC to help make the world a healthier place one plate at a time. She teaches healthy cooking classes and food advocacy. For recipes, class information and articles visit www.lifechef.com

Chef Asata's mother-in-law is Erma Wilburn, owner of Toe Hoe Farm in Worth County, Ga., and she is the chairperson for the Dougherty County Southern Rural Black Women Initiative's Women in Agriculture.

Spring Green Pasta



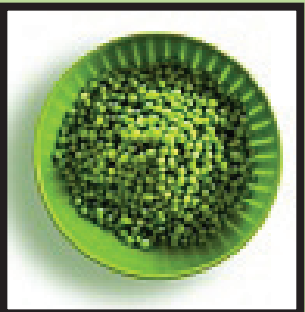
- 2 cups cooked whole wheat pasta (orzo, penne, or your favorite pasta shape)
- 1 small onion, diced
- 3 cloves garlic, minced
- 1 bunch thin asparagus, tough ends removed and cut into 2" pieces
- 1 cup green peas
- 1 bag of baby spinach
- 1 bunch parsley, chopped
- Zest and juice from 2 lemons
- 2 Tbsp extra virgin olive oil, cold pressed



Heat 1 teaspoon of oil in a pan over medium high heat (or spray with cooking spray). Sautee onion until tender, add garlic and cook until aromatic, about 3 minutes. Add the asparagus and the green peas; cook until the asparagus has become bright green and is still crisp, about 5 minutes.



Stir the cooked pasta and the spinach into the vegetables, and cook until heated through. Remove from heat. Stir in the herbs, lemon juice and olive oil. Transfer to a serving dish and serve immediately. For added flavor, sprinkle with 4 oz of feta cheese, pine nuts or walnuts.



Leftover Makeover: serve chilled as a pasta salad with leftover chicken, salmon or shrimp.



Who Is Chef Asata?

Special to The Metro

Chef, writer, and culinary educator, Chef Asata created Life Chef LLC to teach people about healthy cooking. She works to remove obstacles that prevent people from eating nutritious food, by busting these three popular myths:

- 1) Healthy eating doesn't taste good;
- 2) Healthy food is expensive;
- 3) I don't have time to cook.

Chef Asata, how do you make healthy eating taste good? I use real food, and believe it or not, your taste buds notice the difference! I focus on flavor, because I'm from the South, and we have a long history of great tasting food, so if it doesn't taste good, I'm not going to eat it much less serve it to my family. I also use a lot of fresh herbs and dried spices, because when you cut back on fat and salt, you have to crank up the flavor of your food.

How can healthy eating be affordable? Well look at it this way, dried beans and brown rice make a dish that has complete protein, and they are some of the least expensive ingredients in the super market. Also when produce is in season, it's really inexpensive. For example fresh peaches, or zucchini in season are often less than 99 cents per pound. Another way to save is to stock up on frozen vegetables when the stores run by-one-get-one or 10 for \$10 sales. Frozen produces is picked at the peak of ripeness and flash frozen to maintain most of its nutrients, and is preferable over canned vegetables which are often higher in sodium and cooked as part of the canning process. Also, focusing on whole grains and fruits and vegetables, instead of making meat the focus will save some money as well. Meat and dairy are categorically the



Chef Asata Reid

most expensive foods in the store.

You say everyone has time to cook? That's right. Most of the time lost in cooking is due to a lack of planning. If you plan only three meals for this week, buy and prep those meals the day you shop, you will spend on average 15 minutes in the kitchen getting dinner on the table. Just a little bit of planning can save you hours throughout the week, and save you the aggravation of having to answer "What's for dinner?" on the fly.

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