



Ask Ellie

Dietitian and *Healthy Appetite* host **Ellie Krieger** answers your nutrition questions and slims down a holiday side.

Q: Are dried beans better for me than canned?

Monica Otero, Coral Springs, FL

A: For those of us who are too busy to plan ahead—guilty as charged!—canned beans are a meal saver, and they are just as nutritious as dried beans. They're packed with protein, fiber, antioxidants and other nutrients. Just buy low-sodium ones so that you are in control of the amount of salt in your dish. If you have the time, though, dried beans are easy to prepare, and they taste fresher than canned—you'll just have to soak and boil them in advance.

Q: What's the difference between natural and regular peanut butter?

Taylor Gerent, Westlake, OH

A: The main difference between natural and regular peanut butter is that manufacturers add hydrogenated oil (a source of bad trans fat) to standard peanut butter to extend its shelf life and prevent the oil from separating and rising to the top. Natural peanut butter tends to separate, so you have to stir it before you eat it. I think a little stirring is a small price to pay for pure peanut taste (most natural peanut butters contain only peanuts and salt). If you keep the jar in the fridge after you open it, natural peanut butter will stay fresh longer, and you won't need to stir it the next time you use it.



What's a dieter to do on Thanksgiving?

I'm trying to lose weight. Can I still enjoy traditional Thanksgiving sides like sweet potato casserole?

Cyn Witkus, Lakeland, FL

A: So many Thanksgiving foods are healthy: turkey, pumpkin, green beans, and yes, even sweet potatoes. The problem is how we prepare them. This casserole is everything you could want in a holiday dish. It's special and satisfying, but it won't leave you stuffed. I whip the sweet potatoes with an egg to make them creamy without adding a drop of butter, and the pecan topping adds a decadent yet healthy crunch.

SWEET POTATO-PECAN CASSEROLE

ACTIVE: 15 min | TOTAL: 1 hr 15 min | SERVES: 8

- Cooking spray
- 3½ pounds sweet potatoes (about 5 medium), peeled and cut into 1-inch chunks
- ½ cup honey
- 1 large egg
- 1 teaspoon ground cinnamon
- ¼ teaspoon ground nutmeg
- ⅛ teaspoon ground ginger
- Kosher salt
- 1 tablespoon packed dark brown sugar
- ⅓ cup finely chopped pecans

1. Preheat the oven to 350°. Mist an 8-inch square baking dish with cooking spray.
2. Bring a few inches of water to a boil in a pot with a large steamer basket in place. Put the sweet potatoes in the basket, cover and steam until tender, 20 to 25 minutes. Transfer the potatoes to a bowl and let cool slightly. Add the honey, egg, ½ teaspoon cinnamon, the nutmeg, ginger and ½ teaspoon salt; whip with an electric mixer until smooth. Spread the sweet potato mixture in the prepared baking dish.
3. Mix the brown sugar, pecans and the remaining ½ teaspoon cinnamon in a bowl; sprinkle over the potatoes. Bake until hot and beginning to brown around the edges, 40 to 45 minutes.

Per serving: Calories 160; Fat 4 g (Saturated 1 g); Cholesterol 25 mg; Sodium 180 mg; Carbohydrate 31 g; Fiber 3 g; Protein 3 g