

Blue Zone Diets

Eating Like the Centenarians in Nicoya

Inhabitants of the Nicoya Peninsula in Costa Rica follow a diet that consists of traditional foods, including beans, rice, corn, chicken, and eggs. The diet is higher in animal-based protein and lower in healthy fats compared to the other Blue Zone diets. It does contain lots of fiber and low glycemic index foods, which equates to a low intake of processed foods. Nicoyans enjoy a 20% lower mortality rate than their counterparts in other parts of Costa Rica.

If you want to eat like a Nicoyan, structure your overall eating pattern as follows:

Enjoy daily

Vegetables: yucca, plantain, squash, onions, bell peppers, cabbage, tomatoes

Fruits: pejobaya (fruit of the peach fruit palm tree), papaya, mango, pineapple, banana

Legumes: black beans, lentils

Grains: rice, corn, whole grain bread

Poultry: chicken, eggs

Fats: butter, avocado, sunflower and canola oil

Dairy: soft and hard cheeses

Beverages: fresh fruit juices, coffee, guaro (traditional alcoholic drink)

Enjoy occasionally

Meat: beef, pork

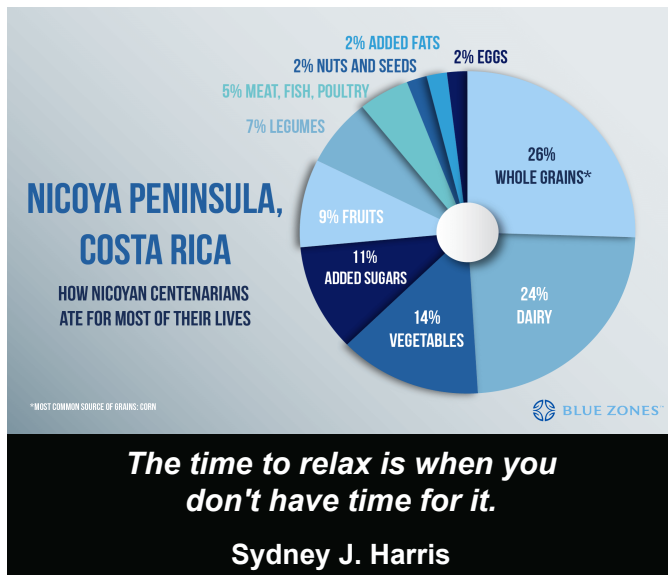
Sweets: pastries, cookies, desserts, table sugar

Avoid

Meat: processed or cured meats

Dairy: cow's milk

Processed Foods: refined grains, frozen foods, sodas



Dear Dr. Liker...

My sister is beginning to experience problems with her eyesight. I'm concerned about my vision since we close in age. Can anything be done to help?



Your eyesight is precious, but unfortunately daily life takes its toll and contributes to diminished vision. Premature ocular disorders are usually the result of the damage caused by ultraviolet light, digital eye strain, and oxidative stress. Cumulative exposure can hasten or worsen the amount of eye damage. For someone who has pre-diabetes or diabetes, their high blood sugar levels can also damage delicate eye tissue (diabetic retinopathy).

Lutein and zeaxanthin are two carotenoid pigments that help protect eye tissue from various types of age-related vision loss, such as glaucoma, cataracts, macular degeneration and diabetic retinopathy. These pigments are found in yellow, orange, and red-colored fruits and vegetables. Unfortunately, eating a richly colored diet doesn't necessarily provide enough lutein and zeaxanthin to be sufficiently beneficial.

Obviously, don't give up a healthy diet filled with plenty of plant-based foods, but do consider a lutein/zeaxanthin supplement for added protection. These supplements contain lutein and zeaxanthin extracted from marigold flowers. Researchers have also shown that the spice saffron helps improve the symptoms associated with macular degeneration.

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