STEP BY STEP

By Earlene Gleisner, RN, Special to Avenues to Wellness

The aroma of rosemary and chicken filled the Willits Senior Center Lakeside Room during the March ATW Speaker Series presentation. A whole chicken had been cooking in a crock pot for 16 hours and was registering a temperature of 180 degrees. This meant it was done.

Since March is National Nutrition Month, Annie Waters, BS, Food Science and Nutrition, presented her talk for Avenues to Wellness titled “Fresh, Fast, and Frugal”. She told us her suggestions for food preparation and recipes which could be done with beef, pork, and turkey, but stretching an organic chicken into six to eight servings was healthier for us in the long run.

Because how much and what kind of food we eat is often based on how much money we have to spend, Annie offered several reasons why we need to buy the freshest meat we can find. Deterioration of the muscle begins at the time of butchering. The sooner we can cook it and eat it, the more nutrients we will consume. Organic meat is usually without hormones or chemicals that have been used to make the animal grow faster and fatter, and its feed is hopefully pesticide free. Eating meat that is not organic can cause a build-up of toxins in our bodies over time, which can begin to spoil our own systems, particularly our livers and kidneys.

The aroma of the chicken kept our attention on her presentation. She suggested recipes for the different parts of the chicken: breasts could be cut up for four servings while the meat from the legs, thighs, and wings could be deboned for a stir fry or burritos. The full, rich broth could be used for a soup. After the meat was eaten, the bones could then be cooked a second time for a few days in the crock pot. This allows the bones, including the cartilage, to soften, releasing calcium, magnesium, phosphorus and other minerals into the water for use in cooking rice or legumes.

Participants at the presentation enjoyed a helping of shredded vegetable slaw (prepared by HMH Nutritional Services), with some shredded chicken. A perfect meal . . . low fat, low carb, and high in protein!

This month’s challenge: When you are planning menus for the week, try to plan one meatless meal. This could be burritos or tacos made with beans (for protein) and rice. It could be a stir fry with tofu (protein) or garbanzo beans. Cooking dried beans costs less than buying them already cooked in a can. If there is anything left after your dinner, you could pack this as an extra meal for your lunch. Homemade food is cheaper and healthier. Such recipes are available on our website.

Avenues to Wellness was created especially for Inland Mendocino County by the Frank R. Howard Foundation. Visit www.avenuestowellness.org or email atwforhealth@gmail.com for more information.

476 words