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Clean-eating spinach and bell-pepper breakfast casserole is a hit with guests. MICHELLE DUDASH

Start day the healthy way with breakfast casserole

By Michelle Dudash
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When it comes to breakfast, I rely on a multitude of quick-fix basics — hard-boiled eggs, fruit, oatmeal, smoothies, yogurt, toast, frozen waffles. But for hungry house guests, I prefer a hearty breakfast casserole. Most, however, are filled with saturated fats-laden ingredients.

So I created my "clean eating" version made with vegetables, healthy fats and whole-grain bread. I keep the sodium in this dish moderate, and then

right before serving, I spritz my serving with Bragg's liquid amino acids to get the "salt" needed for my taste buds.

Feel free to play around with the vegetables, keeping in mind they need to be cooked. If you have some fresh herbs such as parsley, basil or chives, sprinkle on a couple of tablespoons.

Michelle Dudash of Scottsdale is a registered dietitian, chef and author of "Clean Eating for Busy Families." Find a link to her blog, Dudash's Healthy Dish, at azcvoices.com.

Clean Eating Spinach and Bell Pepper Breakfast Casserole

From Michelle Dudash

Expeller-pressed canola-oil spray
4 slices whole-wheat bread, cubed small (about 3 cups)
4 teaspoons extra-virgin olive oil, divided
1 large or 2 small leeks, about 1 1/4 cups, white part only, halved and sliced
3 cups roughly chopped baby spinach
10 large eggs
1 cup low-fat milk
1 cup diced chicken sausage
2 teaspoons Dijon mustard
1/4 teaspoon salt
1/4 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper
1/4 cup diced roasted red bell peppers

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Lightly coat an 8- by 8-inch baking dish with oil spray. Spread the bread cubes in the bottom of the pan and press with hands to shape a crust. Drizzle

with 2 teaspoons oil. Bake crust until crispy around the edges, about 10 minutes. Allow to cool. Place a large saute pan on medium-low heat and add 2 teaspoons olive oil. Add the leeks and cook until translucent, about 5 minutes, then add spinach and cook 2 more minutes until liquid releases and evaporates. Remove from heat and cool.

In a large bowl, beat the eggs until well-blended. Add milk, sausage, Dijon, salt and pepper. Stir vegetables into egg mixture. Slowly pour the egg mixture over the baked crust. Evenly sprinkle the bell peppers on top. Bake 40-45 minutes, or until set in the middle. Allow the casserole to rest a few minutes before cutting.

Makes 9 servings.

Per serving: 190 calories, 10 g total fat (3 g saturated fat, 0 trans fat), 338 mg sodium, 217 mg cholesterol, 11 g total carbohydrate (2 g fiber), 13 g protein.