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TradeMaker



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Hanna Partanen learns
about Nutritioncode

Senukai Superstore

Dare to be happy

Chain-controlled entrepreneurial model

The word 'light'
does not always
signify a low
amount of energy.



Daily groceries

500 g	corn kernel, Bonnie Lee popcorn
500 g	instant cocoa powder, O'boy
500 g	rice crispies, Pirkka
500 g	spaghetti, Barilla
3 l	light milk, Valio
500 g	edam cheese, Pirkka 17%
450 g	muesli bread, Perheleipurit
2	blueberry pies, Fazer
330 g	rye bread, Vaasan ruispalat
4 cups	yogurt, Valio, raspberry-blueberry 150g
400 g	low-fat minced beef, Pirkka
385/200 g	feta cheese, Pirkka 10% light
2	apple pies, Reinin
1 l	3 fruit juice, 100%, Valio
2.5 dl	margarine, Flora
300 g	sauna smoked ham in slices, HK
500 g	bananas, Chiquita
400 g	grapes green, South Africa
1 kg	apples, Pirkka, Royal Gala
1	spring cabbage, Hungary
500 g	clementines, Zaire
330/220 g	sun-dried tomatoes, Royal
500 g	crushed tomatoes, Pirkka/tetra
400 g	tomatoes, Finland
240/100 g	olives black pitted
1 bunch	onions
1	cucumber, Finland
1	pot of basil, Star
1	bell pepper red
1	pot of lettuce, Pirkka, Finland
1	rucola lettuce, Pirkka, Finland

The Nutritioncode service provides all K-supermarket customers with access to the nutritional content of their groceries. Nutritional therapist Hanna Partanen thinks the invention is splendid: any innovation to improve the nation's health is welcome.

TEXT MARJO TIIRIKKA · PHOTOS JARI HÄRKÖNEN

Nutritioncode guides towards healthy choices

Hanna Partanen examines the daily groceries bought by a family of four with interest: minced meat, crushed tomatoes, spaghetti, feta cheese, olives, sun-dried tomatoes, bell pepper and clementines.

“Seems much like a basic menu. Nothing shocking, and fortunately the minced meat is low-fat,” she says.

Information about groceries bought by the family is transferred to the Nutritioncode (Ravintokoodi.fi) web service that lists the nutritional content of the purchases. The service developed by Tuulia International Oy establishes the nutritional quality and composition of the home diet. The system also reports, among other things, the sources and quantity of energy and the type of fat. The shopping basket is compared with the recommendations of the Advisory Committee on Foodstuffs.

In this case, only sugar and salt exceeded the recommended quantities. Foods loaded with sugar include instant cocoa powder, yogurts and berry pies.

Rice crispies contained most salt and are, according to Hanna Partanen, unnecessary in other respects too. As the nutritional content of rice crispies is next to nothing, they could be replaced by muesli which is rich in fibres.

Bread, cheeses and – rather surprisingly – milk also contain salt.

“All milk contains sodium, which is a component of salt. This is not mentioned in the nutrition facts. For example, if you only eat vegetables, the salt content may be highlighted in the results because of the sodium contained in milk. This issue could be taken up in the web service, because few people are aware of this,” Partanen suggests.

The amount of saturated fat makes the nutritional therapist contemplate a little. According to Nutritioncode, the amount was within recommendations despite the fact that the shopping basket contained many products in which the proportion of hard fats exceeds 50 per cent: low-fat milk, cheeses, yogurts, low-fat minced meat and cocoa.

Though the cheeses eaten by the family are low-fat varieties, it's the intake quantity that is decisive.



“People may consume lighter alternatives more than their regular counterparts. If you eat six slices of light cheese per day, it is too much. And two pieces of light cheese contain more energy than one piece of regular cheese.”

Folate and vitamin D at large

The Nutritioncode service shows whether the customer gets all required vitamins from their purchases. This family's purchases turn on the red signal light at vitamins A, D and E, and folate. This is not alarming, however, because not all vitamins are needed every day. Vitamin A, for example, is stored in the liver for up to several months.

The biggest concern for Finns is the supply of folate, or folic acid, and vitamin D. Lack of folate can cause lack of appetite and muscular weakness. Folate, which is needed above all by young women planning to have a baby, can be obtained from dark green vegetables, whole grain products and liver.

Intake of vitamin D became easier some years ago, when dairies started to add it to milk products, except for organic milk. People also get vitamin D from the sun, fish and eggs.

Fish twice a week

According to recommendations, fish should be eaten twice a week. The family's groceries did not include fish this time but probably would over a longer period.

Fish should be preferably cooked without butter and cream. Hanna Partanen does not rate fish fingers, the children's favourite, too highly.

“I consider fish fingers as a 50% fish meal only! Fortunately stores now have much more than only frozen saithe in their selections. For example, salmon medallions and rainbow trout strips make tasty meals. And cream, the traditional ingredient of a rainbow trout casserole, can easily be replaced with vegetable fat. Fish is an excellent ingredient for soups and salads, too.”

It is the big picture that decides

There are many beliefs concerning healthy nutrition that do not necessarily hold true. A common argument against light products is that they contain more additives than their regular counterparts. But the fact is that Finnish legislation concerning additives is so strict that they pose no hazard to consumers.



“Just use your common sense! Additives arouse many unnecessary fears. Fatal illnesses are much more often caused by obesity than additives,” snaps Hanna Partanen.

Natural products may contain substances regarded as additives. Lingonberries, for example, contain five different

substances that would be marked with E numbers, which are codes for food additives.

The word ‘light’ does not always signify a low amount of energy. This concerns semi-skimmed milk (called ‘light’ milk in Finnish), for example. With a fat content of 1.5%, it is ‘light’, true, but three glasses of the milk contain two teaspoons of pure fat. Hanna Partanen recommends skimmed milk for the whole family.

Fix the big things first

Consumers should take a comprehensive attitude towards information obtained from Nutritioncode: if some product is missing today, it may be in the shopping basket next time. The fact is that the fridge keeps food fit for consumption for several days.

“Don’t go to extremes in anything and remember that it’s the big picture that decides. Furthermore, all foods purchased will not be eaten. Some of it will be wasted, particularly in families with children. However, cereal or berry pies are seldom thrown away, but it is unfortu-

nately products like spoiled lettuce that end up in the bin,” reminds Hanna Partanen.

Before taking up a magnifying glass to view the nutritional content, larger and more important things should be put in order: more vegetables, smaller-sized meals. After cooking, vegetables still contain fibres though some of the vitamins dissolve into the water.

“I freeze grated carrot, because I have no time to fix a salad every day. Grating and freezing destroy some of the vitamins, but I think eating carrots in any form still beats not eating them.”

Hanna Partanen believes that the Nutritioncode service helps people who are interested in the nutritional content of food. She is not afraid that the service will cause a customer loss for nutritional therapists.

“Nutritional therapists are not much employed by private people. Besides, there is so much work to do that we really have no time to save everybody. Since improving public health is in the interests of everybody and should be our common objective, self-steering systems are most welcome!”

Consumers decide

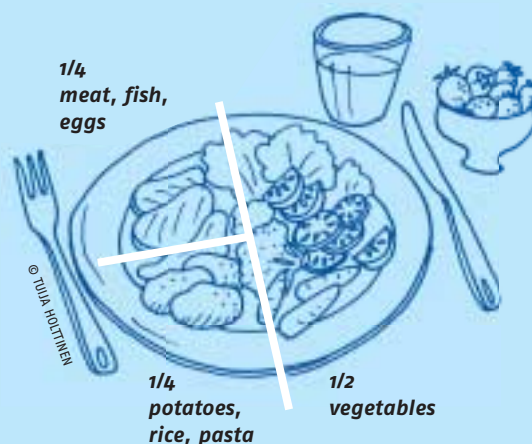
Consumers have taken to the Nutritioncode service provided by K-supermarkets with enthusiasm. Introduced in April, the system already has thousands of users.

Marketing Manager **Jaana Hertsberg** of Kesko Food sees the service as an extra benefit offered by K-supermarkets; well compatible with their wish to be ‘a better than average food store’.

“The service is not pushed to customers; they are free to choose whether to receive information on the nutritional content of their purchases or not,” says Hertsberg.

Most customers greet it with pleasure that the store promotes healthy choices. According to Managing Director **Eero Toivainen** of Tuulia International Oy, participation of K-supermarkets in the Nutritioncode service adds positive reputation to the chain and signals to consumers that Kesko wants to be a pioneer. ■

The plate concept encourages a healthy and balanced diet. The concept is simple: half of the plate is filled with vegetables and the other half is divided between potatoes, rice or pasta and meat, fish or chicken.



All customers who are interested in the nutritional content of their groceries receive a personal bar code sticker on their K-Plus cards at a K-supermarket, and information about the purchases is transmitted to the Nutritioncode web service. On the following weekday, customers can check on their home computers how their purchases were divided between different food categories, how much energy they contained and how much of various nutrients their purchases contained. A customer pays 20 cents per shopping visit for recording the data, but can use the Internet service free of charge. The service is fully protected, and the system does not collect or process any personal data. ■

Read more at:
www.ravintokoodi.fi