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Give your Thanksgiving table a veggie-packed twist

Turkey may get top billing at Thanksgiving, but we can't forget to give the side dishes the credit they deserve. They're often the most colorful, flavorful and interesting part of the meal.

With Thanksgiving coming up soon, you may already have most of your menu planned. Family favorites are likely nonnegotiable, and there's no reason to change that. But if you're looking for one more dish to round out the table or want to try something new beyond the usual lineup of casseroles and potatoes, there's still time to add something special.

I love finding ways to make vegetables every bit as appealing as the rest of the holiday spread. And it doesn't have to be complicated.

Sometimes the simplest preparation is the best. Toss eggplant, zucchini or squash with olive oil, sea salt and freshly ground pepper, then roast until golden and caramelized. Or, spice things up, quite literally, with a pinch of cayenne and the lightest drizzle of honey over roasted carrots.

For something a little more unexpected, try roasted beets topped with crumbled goat cheese and chopped macadamia nuts. The combination of earthy, creamy and crunchy is *oh so good*.

And if you're still looking for one more vegetable dish to add to your Thanksgiving spread, I've got a good one for you. This Brussels + Broccoli Mash from Mestizo Louisiana Mexican Cuisine, featured in *The Eat Fit Cookbook,* is another way to bring something different to the table. Roasted Brussels sprouts, broccoli, tomatillos and garlic come together with creamy Greek yogurt for a flavorful twist on traditional mashed potatoes.

And it's easy to make it your own. Swap cauliflower for the broccoli, use a combination of all three cruciferous vegetables, or adjust the red pepper flakes depending on how much heat you like.

Whether you're hosting Thanksgiving or bringing a dish to share, this is a simple way to add something fresh, flavorful and nutritious to the celebration.



Brussels + Broccoli Mash

Mestizo Louisiana Mexican Cuisine

Makes 4 servings

1 cup broccoli florets, cut into small pieces
1 cup Brussels sprouts, quartered
1 teaspoon red pepper flakes
2 cloves garlic, minced
4 tomatillos, quartered
½ cup diced white onion
½ teaspoon sea salt
½ teaspoon freshly ground black pepper
1 tablespoon light olive oil
¾ cup 2% plain Greek yogurt

Preparation

Preheat oven to 400 degrees. Blanch broccoli and Brussels sprouts in boiling water for 3 minutes, then transfer to an ice bath to stop the cooking. Drain.

Spread the vegetables, red pepper flakes, garlic, tomatillos and onion on a sheet pan. Season with salt and pepper, drizzle with olive oil and toss to coat.

Roast for 25 minutes, tossing once or twice. Transfer to a bowl and mash with the back of a spoon. Stir in Greek yogurt until creamy. Serve warm.

PER SERVING: *110 calories, 5 grams fat, 1 gram saturated fat, 125 mg sodium, 12 grams carbohydrate (8 grams net carbs), 4 grams fiber, 5 grams sugar (0 added sugar), 7 grams protein. GF, LOW CARB, VEGETARIAN, LOW SODIUM*

Find this recipe and more in "The Eat Fit Cookbook," available for purchase at local retailers or online at EatFitCookbook.com. Be sure to use promo code **ADVOCATE** at checkout for 10% off.

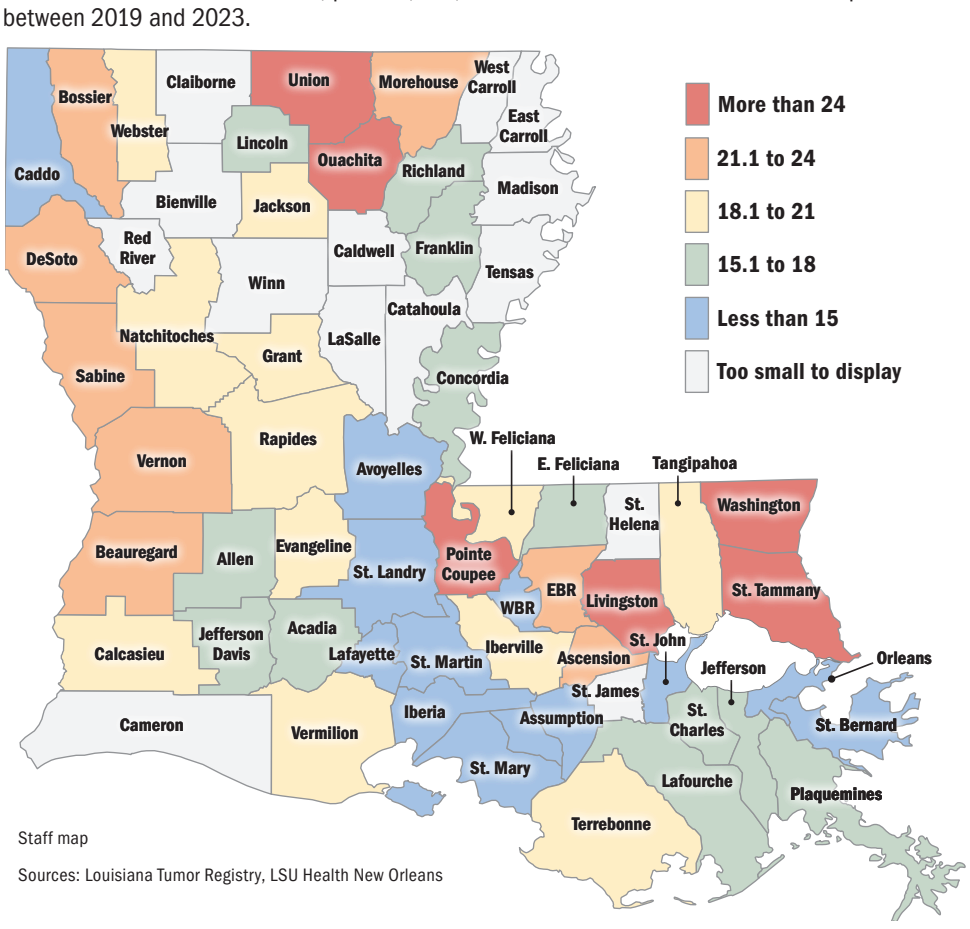
Molly Kimball, RD, CSSD, is a registered dietitian with Ochsner Health and founder of Ochsner's Eat Fit nonprofit initiative. For more wellness content, tune in to Molly's podcast, FUELED Wellness + Nutrition, and follow @MollykimballRD and @EatFitOchsner on social media. Email nutrition@ochsner.org to connect with Molly or schedule a consult with her team.

BY THE NUMBERS

LOUISIANA'S MELANOMA RATE IS BELOW U.S. AVERAGE, BUT STILL RISING

Melanoma in Louisiana

The annual cancer incidence rate, per 100,000, for Louisianans with melanoma in each parish between 2019 and 2023.



Staff map

Sources: Louisiana Tumor Registry, LSU Health New Orleans

Melanoma, the deadliest form of skin cancer, has steadily increased in the U.S. and Louisiana over the past three decades.

On average, there are over 1,000 cases of melanoma diagnosed each year in Louisiana, at an incidence rate of 19.2 cases per 100,000 people, according to data collected by LSU Health New Orleans' Louisiana Tumor Registry. That's significantly less than the national average which hovers around 25 to 28 cases per 100,000, varying by registry collections.

States with the highest reported melanoma incidence rates include Utah (43.8) and other western and mountain states with high UV exposure, according to data from the National Cancer Institute.

Louisiana has the 7th-lowest incidence rate of melanoma, per the most recent data available in 2023, but rates are climbing, data from the AIM at Melanoma Foundation.

In 1990, Louisiana reported 324 new cases of melanoma. In 2023, the state tumor registry reported 1,226 — an increase of nearly four times.

The national average alone more than doubled since 2000, from 12,755 new cases to 27,093 in 2023.

Several studies have made efforts to pinpoint reasons for the increase have looked at tanning bed use, increased awareness and reporting, the relationship between sunscreen use and duration of sun exposure and more. None have definitive answers.

Although the rate of new cases has increased, deaths from melanoma remain relatively unchanged in the U.S., from 2.7 deaths per 100,000 in 2000 to 2 deaths per 100,000 in 2023, the National Cancer Institute reported.

According to the Louisiana Tumor Registry, only two parishes had higher than the national average for melanoma cases per 100,000 people: St. Tammany Parish (**35.5**) and Union Parish (**29**).

After them, these parishes had the highest incidence rate, per 100,000, of Louisianans with melanoma between 2019 and 2023:

- Livingston Parish with 27.9;
- Ouachita Parish with 26;
- Point Coupee Parish with 25.2;
- Washington Parish 24.3;
- Ascension Parish with 23.7;
- Sabine Parish 23.1;
- Bossier Parish with 22.8;
- and Vernon Parish with 22.1.

These parishes had data too small to include in the registry: Bienville, Caldwell, Cameron, Catahoula, Claiborne, East Carroll, La Salle, Madison, Red River, St. Helena, St. James, Tensas, West Carroll and Winn.

HEALTH NOTES

Tulane acquires tech to advance cell research

Tulane University's School of Medicine and its researchers have a new tool to study cells and how they respond to infection and inflammation.

With a $430,000 grant from the National Institutes of Health, the school has obtained a full-spectrum flow cytometer, an instrument that rapidly analyzes individual cells with five lasers and 64 high-sensitivity fluorescence detection channels.

The device will support the work of "at least a dozen" researchers at Tulane, including cancer research, neuroscience, immunology, infectious diseases, inflammation and vaccines, the university reported.

1st La. child cured of sickle cell with gene therapy

Phillip Mullin, a 15-year-old from Alexandria who had been hospitalized over 100 times in his life for sickle cell disease, is the second person and first child in Louisiana to receive a one-time gene therapy treatment as a "functional cure" for the disease.

In late October, Manning Family Children's hospital celebrated the teen whose own genetically modified blood stem cells added more-functional copies of his genes, leading to a production of more anti-sickling hemoglobin that may decrease or stop painful episodes.

Phillip had "the highest hemoglobin of his life" 100 days later, according to a hospital statement.

Phillip hopes to become a pediatric hematology-oncology physician, the hospital said, so that he can care for children facing the same challenges he has overcome with such remarkable courage and resilience.

LDH opens third round of HERO Fund applications

The Louisiana Department of Health is accepting applications for the third round of the Health Care Employment Reinvestment Opportunity, or HERO, Fund, which provides matching grants to help expand Louisiana's healthcare workforce.

The grant covers a two-year period from July 1, 2027, to June 30, 2029. Applications are due Nov. 19 at 5 p.m. The fund supports partnerships between healthcare training and education programs and industry partners to address workforce needs in nursing, allied health and other high-demand healthcare occupations. Grants are designed to expand training opportunities, increase enrollment and program completion and help more Louisianians enter and remain in healthcare careers, according to a release from the department.

Previous recipients include the Baton Rouge Health District, which received $1 million to train medical assistants and Delgado Community College, which received $1.4 million to introduce an evening and weekend license practical nurse-to-registered nurse tack. LSU of Alexandria received $1.2 million to expand associate nursing degrees and more.

The department requires a dollar-for-dollar match from healthcare partners in the competitive grant application process.

Health Notes is an occasional listing of health happenings around Louisiana. Have something you'd like to share? Contact us at margaret.delaney@theadvocate.com.