The theme for the 2013 National Nutrition Month (which starts on March 1!) is “Eat Right, Your Way, Every Day,” and encourages personalized, healthy eating styles. It recognizes that food preferences, lifestyle, cultural and ethnic traditions, as well as health concerns, all impact individual food choices.

The Academy strives to communicate healthy eating messages that emphasize a balance of food and beverages within energy needs, rather than any one food or meal. To this end, it is the position of the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics that the total diet or overall pattern of food eaten is the most important focus of healthy eating. Most favorite foods can fit within this pattern, if consumed in moderation with appropriate portion size and combined with physical activity.

“There can be a misperception that eating healthfully means giving up your favorite foods,” said registered dietitian and Academy President Ethan A. Bergman. “This theme encourages consumers to include the foods they love as part of a healthful eating plan that is tailored for their lifestyles, traditions, health needs and, of course, tastes.”

“There’s no one-size-fits-all way to eat that’s right for everyone,” says registered dietitian and Academy spokesperson Jim White. “If the diet doesn’t fit with your lifestyle and needs, it won’t work in the long-term and can even leave you missing out on the nutrition you need to get you through the day.”

White offers the following tips to eat right for your lifestyle:

**Athletes:**
Whether you are a competitive athlete or just enjoy working out, what you eat will affect your performance. Your body needs fuel to function, so eat a light breakfast or snack before you exercise. Try low-fat yogurt, graham crackers with peanut butter, a banana or cereal with low-fat milk. Before, during and after exercise, replace fluids with plenty of water or a sports drink, if you prefer.

**Career:** Busy work days and business travel can lead to on-the-fly meals. For desktop dining, keep single-serve packages of crackers, fruit, peanut butter, low-sodium soup or canned tuna in your desk. Always on the go? Tuck portable, nonperishable foods in a purse, briefcase or backpack for a meal on the run. Try granola bars, peanut butter and crackers, fresh fruit, trail mix or single-serve packages of whole-grain cereal or crackers.

Challenge yourself to prepare healthy food you’ve made at home to take to work for lunch!

**Families:**
Caring for family, whether children, elderly parents or both, can be challenging. However, family meals allow parents the chance to promote healthy eating. Keep things simple by building a collection of recipes for quick and easy family favorites. Choose ingredients that you can use from more than one meal. For example, cook extra grilled chicken for chicken salad or fajitas the next day. Get the kids involved by letting them help to make a salad, set the table or doing other simple tasks.

If you’d like to learn more, the National Nutrition Month website includes a variety of helpful tips, games, and nutrition education resources.

**Quick Takes: Beware of Fad Diets**

With all the focus on weight in our society, it isn’t surprising that millions of people fall prey to fad diets and bogus weight-loss products. There are no foods or pills that magically burn fat. No products will miraculously melt fat while you watch TV or sleep. If you want to maintain a healthy weight, build muscle and lose fat, the best path is a lifelong combination of eating smarter and moving more. Click here to see a timeline of fad diets!
Building Blocks for Strong Teeth and Healthy Gums!

What you eat affects your mouth not only by building healthier teeth and gums, but also by helping prevent tooth decay and gum disease. While a healthy diet rich in fruits and vegetables, whole grains, lean proteins, and unsaturated fats will benefit your overall oral health, there are a few standout foods and nutrients that can really boost it.

**Calcium:** When a diet is low in calcium, as a majority of Americans’ diets are, the body leeches the mineral from teeth and bones, which can increase your risk of tooth decay and the incidence of cavities. Calcium is found in dairy foods like milk, cheese, and yogurt; in fish, including sardines with bones and salmon; and in some vegetables, including kale and broccoli.

**Vitamin C:** The body needs vitamin C to repair connective tissue and help the body fight off infection. Gingivitis is the mildest form of periodontal diseases, and it causes the gums to become red from inflammation, swelling and bleeding easily. Eating one piece of citrus fruit (oranges, grapefruits, tangerines) or a kiwi daily will help you meet the Recommended Daily Allowance for vitamin C.

**Fruits and Vegetables:** Crunchy fruit and veggies — like apples, pears, celery, and carrots are excellent for your teeth in two ways. The crisp texture acts as a detergent on teeth, wiping away bacteria that can cause plaque. Plus, these foods require a lot of chewing, which increases the production of bacteria-neutralizing saliva.

**Tea:** Studies at the University of Illinois College of Dentistry have shown that compounds in black tea can destroy or suppress the growth of cavity-causing bacteria in dental plaque, which can help prevent both cavities and gum disease.

**Foods to Avoid:** Sugary snacks, especially gummy candies and hard candies that stick in your teeth are at the top of every dentist’s list of foods to avoid. Soda provides a double hit to teeth, combining sugar with acids. Even foods and drinks that are good for your teeth, like milk, contain sugars. No matter what you eat, it’s important to brush and floss afterward—or at least to rinse your mouth with water. Brush twice a day using either a manual or power toothbrush and remember to visit a dentist at least twice a year for checkups.

Recipe: Stuffed Chicken Breasts

Greek yogurt is the secret to this succulent stuffed chicken. It’s much thicker than regular yogurt because a lot of the liquid whey is strained out, making it perfect for adding flavor and keeping the chicken moist. And the three ounce serving — about the size of a deck of cards — is ideal. Fill the rest of your plate with some veggie side dishes for a complete New American Plate meal.

**Ingredients**
- Canola oil cooking spray
- 1 lb. boneless, skinless chicken breast, four thick pieces
- 3/4 cup low-fat shredded cheddar cheese
- 2 Tbsp. green onions, finely chopped, including the stems
- 1 medium red bell pepper, 1/2 diced, 1/2 sliced
- 1 Tbsp. plain Greek yogurt
- 2 tsp. fresh lemon juice
- 1/2 tsp. hot sauce (optional)
- 1 Tbsp. olive oil
- 1/4 cup chopped fresh parsley or 1 Tbsp. dried parsley
- Salt and freshly ground pepper to taste

**Directions**
1. Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Spray 7 x 11-inch pan with cooking spray.
2. Carefully cut about a 1 inch wide slit into the thick end of each chicken breast. Insert knife to create a fairly deep pocket.
3. Combine cheese, green onions, red pepper, yogurt, lemon juice and hot sauce in mixing bowl. Divide mixture into four portions and use a spoon to stuff breasts. Secure openings with wooden toothpicks inserted at an angle so meat lays flat. Place in prepared pan.
4. Brush olive oil over top of chicken and sprinkle with parsley, then pepper and salt, if using.
Bake for 30-35 minutes or until chicken is cooked through. Let stand about five minutes. Garnish with red pepper slices and serve.