

HEALTHY FOOD FOR LIFE

Article by Auriana Koutnik

Cooking instructor Tamera Wilhite understands first-hand what a difference delicious, healthy food can make in leading a healthy, happy life. In her 20s, she was diagnosed with macular degeneration, told she would be blind by age 40, and that nothing could be done to preserve her eyesight. She was given no hope.

Luckily, Tamera believes "You should always have hope." She began researching the role of nutrition in preventing illnesses like hers and changed her diet accordingly. She began eating anti-oxidant-rich fruits and vegetables, and nutrient-rich whole grains, nuts, and seeds.

Now, more than 30 years later, Tamera's vision has not deteriorated at all. In fact, the experience gave her a new vision:

to share her knowledge with others seeking healthier diets to lead healthier lives. Today, as a licensed Food for Life cooking instructor, she takes pleasure in teaching others how to prepare delicious and easy plant-based meals. The Food for Life program is an award-winning nutrition education and cooking class program that provides an innovative approach to diet-related chronic diseases.



Photo by Auriana Koutnik

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Designed by The Physicians Committee for Responsible Medicine, the Food for Life program promotes healthful eating based on the latest scientific research. Food for Life classes includes specific information about how certain foods and nutrients work to promote or discourage disease, cooking demonstrations of delicious and healthful recipes, practical cooking skills and tips for incorporating healthful eating habits into daily life, and a supportive and motivational atmosphere to empower participants to take charge of their health with the foods that are put on their plates.

During a recent class in October, Tamera demonstrated how to prepare and cook dishes from scratch using fresh produce, whole grains, and other ingredients. She discussed where to get each of the ingredients, as well as where to find prepared items such as cooked quinoa in case they don't want to cook it from scratch. She distributed Food for Life handouts on foods that increase or decrease cancer risk, the Power of Soy, and the Food Rainbow. Each class ends with a shared meal.

Some participants attend because they want to learn about healthier eating, others because they want to learn how to cook delicious and easy plant-based meals; and still others have already transitioned to a plant-based diet and seek more cooking knowledge.

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Photo by Auriana Koutnik

TAMERA'S YUMMY QUINOA BOWLS

*Recipes from Food For Life
Instructor Tamera Wilhite*

1. Cook quinoa according to package directions or for the instant pot 1 cup quinoa and 1 ½ cup water high pressure for 3 minutes, natural release.

2. Boil frozen edamame about 5 minutes and drain.

3. Steam fresh or frozen veggies (broccoli, carrots, cauliflower); break/chop into pieces and steam about 5 minutes until just tender.

4. Chop fresh toppings such as bell peppers, onions, cilantro, parsley.

5. Place cooked quinoa in a bowl, add edamame, arrange veggies on top or side, sprinkle with toppings and then add Yummy sauce on top. Enjoy!

YUMMY SAUCE

This sauce is delicious on a variety of bowls, salads, or as a dip.

The sauce thickens upon refrigeration; you can add water to thin as desired. Can be frozen.

INGREDIENTS

1 cup water
⅔ cup almond butter
1 cup chickpeas
1 pkg organic silken tofu (shelf stable in the aseptic carton or refrigerator section in supermarket cold section)
½ cup fresh lemon juice
4 cloves garlic
1 teaspoon salt
3 teaspoon curry powder
2 teaspoon oregano
2 teaspoon dry cilantro or a couple sprigs of fresh
1 cup nutritional yeast

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Place all ingredients into a blender and blend well.
2. Enjoy right away or store it in the refrigerator.

Special Holiday Cooking Class

Interested in preparing delicious and healthy plant-based dishes this holiday season? Tamera is offering a one-day, holiday-themed cooking class on Wednesday, November 12, from 5-7 p.m. at the First Christian Church of Springfield. Tamera will show participants how to cook a delicious lentil loaf, mashed potatoes, gravy, cranberry sauce, and pumpkin mousse. The class cost \$20 per person and includes food samples. To register, contact Tamera by text or call her at 541-221-3585 or email tamera@powerplatenutrition.com.

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Tamera, who was licensed as a Food for Life instructor in 2013, teaches the four-week cooking series in the Eugene-Springfield area several times per year. The next four-week class will begin in January 2026.

She also collaborates with the Eugene Plant-Based Providers to conduct a free cooking demo class as part of the group's 12-week Live Lifestyle Medicine class series.

The next free cooking demo will take place on Tuesday, November 18, from 7-8:30 p.m. at the First Christian Church of Springfield, located at 395 Centennial Boulevard in Springfield.

For information, contact Tamera by text or call her at 541-221-3585 or send her an email: tamera@powerplatenutrition.com.

"You should always have hope."

- Tamera Wilhite



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