

Change your diet - and be happy about it

By Mary Germanotta Duquette

mary@maryduquette.com

Published on www.ehow.com



We all want to eat well. Some of us work hard to maintain a healthful diet, but instead end up falling back on the foods we've grown to love – even though we know those foods may not be the best choices for us, and for our health.

You might believe that in order to stay fit, you have to give up the most delicious dishes – the ones you love the most. But eating well doesn't mean that you have to sacrifice the foods you enjoy, as long as you keep moderation as the rule. There are many delicious foods you can eat that are also good for you. Finding these foods and making the initial change is perhaps the most difficult step.

To start, review your diet. Write it down, if necessary. Try to cut out all the junk, such as fast-food, and chemical-laden snacks like candy bars and “fruit” roll-ups. (Anything *that* color blue is not really food)!

Eat sweets only occasionally. You don't have to completely cut them out of your diet. Remember that moderation is the key - so a piece of chocolate every once in awhile is not going to hurt. Just make sure that the chocolate you select has no chemicals or additives, such as artificial coloring and flavoring, or vanillin - a synthetic version of pure vanilla extract. These chemicals might initially make things taste better to you, but once you get out of the habit of eating them, you'll notice the difference in taste between all-natural, whole foods, and the not-so-natural ones.

Buy whole, healthful foods. There are plenty of tasty alternatives available at the grocery store. Some good choices are:

- **Fresh Fruits.** Many fruits are high in vitamins and fiber, and can boost your energy better than that cup o' joe. Bananas, for example, are rich in potassium and can provide you with a fantastic pick-me-up. Blueberries are full of antioxidants and vitamin C - and they taste great.
- **Naturally Processed Meats.** There are some delicious, all-natural meats available in most grocery stores that have no added nitrates or nitrites - chemicals that contribute to a poor diet. Monosodium glutamate, or MSG, is an added flavor-enhancer that causes adverse side effects in some people, such as headaches, numbness, and general allergy symptoms. Try to avoid these chemical enhancers, and stick to the ingredients you know. Applegate Farms, for example, produces many various sandwich meats with no added chemicals. You can find them at your local grocer.

- **Simple Snacks.** For snacking, try nuts – they’re rich in protein and potassium, and full of antioxidants and B vitamins, as well as full of flavor. Nuts are also high in unsaturated fat, which studies have shown can lower low-density lipoprotein cholesterol. And, the more you chew, the less you eat – so nuts can be a great way to shed those extra pounds.

Try slathering celery with peanut butter - and then sprinkle a few raisins, or dried cranberries, on top. As well as satisfying your craving for sweets, the combination of nutrients in this snack packs a full punch of protein, folate, fiber, and vitamin C. If you are allergic to peanuts, there are plenty of other nut butters available. Try almond or sunflower butter as an alternative.

If you really crave those beloved salty snacks, don’t completely deprive yourself. Go ahead and indulge in a handful of chips once in awhile – again, in moderation. Most grocery stores offer chips without chemical additives.

- **Foods with Fewer Ingredients.** It’s important to get in the habit of reading labels. A good rule of thumb is that the longer the list of ingredients, the worse it is for you. If you look at a label and feel like you’re reading a novel, put the product back down. Also, if you read something on a label that baffles you, chances are it may be an additive. Be on the safe side, and don’t buy it.

Investing in a good cookbook or two is an effective way to keep track of healthful eating. There are many recipes available that are quick and easy, and also great for you. Try not to focus so much on the low-carb, low-cal dietary cookbooks, and concentrate on dishes that provide you with nutritional value, and that emphasize moderation. A couple of winners are the "Moosewood" cookbook, and "Rachael Ray's 30-Minute Get Real Meals: Eat Healthy Without Going to Extremes."



Remember - don’t get caught up in another person’s idea of beauty and health. Feeling good is all that matters - and if you feel good, and are healthy, then you’re doing fine. Be content with yourself by relaxing, eating healthfully, and enjoying who you are - from the inside out

More tips and tricks:

- **Concerned with Carbs?** Try eating whole grain carbs, rather than cutting them out altogether. Brown rice, whole wheat pasta and bread, and quinoa (a nutritious, complete protein that you can prepare in the place of rice) are fantastic alternatives to the usual all-white carbs you may have grown up with. Whole grain products are widely available in most grocery stores today.
- **Watering Down.** Make sure you drink lots of water - about eight large glasses or so per day. As well as being just plain good for you, water is also beneficial for your complexion, and helps you to lose weight. Try squeezing a little lemon in your glass for an extra boost of flavor. Lemon-water is also great for your liver, and acts as a detoxifier.
- **Social Eating.** Eat dinner with your friends or family. Eating alone can cause you to over-eat, but if you have company you’ll engage in conversation and linger over your

meal. And the slower you eat, the less you'll eat.

- **Walk, Stretch, Dance!** Eating well is important, but make sure that you also get enough exercise. Walking is a wonderful way to strengthen your body, and can also relieve stress and anxiety. Yoga is another low-impact way to strengthen your mind and body, and will help you feel refreshed. Or try putting on some music and dancing around your living room. You'll have fun, and get in a good workout all at the same time.
- **Shop in Season.** When you're shopping, pick fruits and vegetables that are seasonal, for the best possible flavor and texture. Oranges in the middle of summer, for example, are not as sweet and delicious as their January-born cousins. Shopping this way also helps lower your carbon footprint, as you can easily buy locally-grown produce by paying attention to what's in season.
- **Love Yourself - Unconditionally.** Remember that most people who are featured in the mainstream media are not what the majority of the human race looks like. Stop trying to live up to that unrealistic expectation, eat well and exercise, and enjoy your own unique beauty.

Sources:

- *Bright Hub*
<http://www.brighthouse.com>
- *About.com – Chinese Food*
<http://www.chinesefood.about.com>
- *The Healthier Life*
<http://www.thehealthierlife.co.uk>
- *Look Great, Lose Weight, Save Money*
<http://www.lookgreat-loseweight-savemoney.com>

###