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DIET FOOD VS. REAL FOOD

HOW TO FIT “REAL” FOODS INTO YOUR DAILY DIET AND STAY SLIM, NATURALLY

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One of the quickest ways to feel deprived is to give up all of your favorite foods. But if you've been struggling with your weight, it is time to think about words.

THE GRAMMAR OF DIET

I used to think of “diet” as a verb, as something I had to “go on” to conquer overweight, and for the longest time, I went “on a diet” every Monday. With the best intentions, I'd buy all the foods on the plan and would be “good” for a day or two, maybe three. But then I'd “cheat” on my diet, and that would set me off onto a search for another one. First, I'd castigate myself for my lack of willpower, but after a while, I'd try again. And lose a few pounds. And “cheat” and regain.

It became obvious to me that the way I thought about this word was keeping me fat. I have lots of company! People commonly use diet as a verb – an action word – as in “to diet” or to “go on a weight loss diet,” but the Latin root of diet is from the Greek *diaita*: to live one's life. For many, diet means hunger, deprivation, boredom and failure – that's how I used to think, too. Instead, choose to nourish your body with your natural diet, one that gives you life and gives you health.

People think that when they diet they have to eat only “good” foods. And they dread it, because this means giving up their favorite “bad” foods in order to lose weight. But attaching human attributes to food means confusion, negative thinking and frustration. After all, if you only like “bad” foods, does that make you a bad person? And if you're a bad person, then you don't deserve to be thin, right? So you may as well just keep eating!

Turn it around and say farewell to that type of thinking.

Of course, all diets can work, and studies show that low carb, low fat, even meal replacement diets work, because they create a framework around food. By this definition, you follow the plan, which reduces your calories, and if you add some activity into your week you create a calorie deficit. The deficit means pounds lost. Simple, right?

Are you “on a diet” or is your diet the foods and beverages that keep you thin, naturally? The way you think about that all-too-improperly-used four-letter word means the difference between living and dieting, and losing and regaining. Why subject yourself to someone else's suggested weight loss regimen? If your belief is that “real food” is fatty burgers and fries instead of fresh grilled fish and an olive oil-brushed baked potato, then weight control will be elusive.

No diet works permanently unless you adopt the healthy habits you used to lose weight. If, once you see that “magic number” on the scale you say, “Great! Now I can eat ‘real food’ again,” then all too soon that weight will start creeping back – one mega bran muffin, one burger and one French fry at a time.

Instead of “real,” think special, or traditional, or occasional. Holiday treats don't have to be off the menu, and you can enjoy favorite treats without guilt, but the



trick is to make it a small, special portion. That's how to do it without gaining weight, and that's how to make weight control second nature. Instead of dieting, I changed the way I live. I associate the word diet with what I usually eat, not as a prescribed eating plan to lose weight. That works! I can remain thin naturally by changing my thinking and my choices. I eat real good food, every day. I keep in mind that I have the power to choose my diet, so I never have to go on a diet again.

There are no bad foods, just bad habits.

Stay calorie-conscious, not calorie-obsessed, and enjoy real, delicious and nutritious foods.

TOP TIPS FOR LIVING THIN NATURALLY

- All “diets” work, but unless you make permanent changes to your usual diet, you won't keep fat off permanently. Make your new diet full of tasty, low calorie foods and you won't feel deprived. Permanent fat loss depends on regular activity.
- Create your personal calorie deficit – not by eating too few calories, but by changing what you eat and by adding activities. The best way to lose and maintain without regaining is to exercise...every day.
- Are you “in love” with the foods that are keeping you fat? That calls for a change of attitude! Love yourself first. Identify the foods that are keeping you fat and cross them off your shopping list...forever. For me, it was the huge bran muffin with more than 600 calories that I ate every morning – I switched to cereal, fruit and nonfat milk, and feel full for half the calories.
- An occasional high calorie dessert is OK, but cut calories by sharing it, and plan for it.
- Are you eating out more than once a week? Cut back to only one time weekly until you reach your goal. Choose baked, grilled or broiled lean meats, avoid fried foods, sauces and cheeses and lose weight automatically.
- Portion size is the key to permanent weight control. Serving “family style” and buffets encourages overeating; instead, plate your meat and starch in the kitchen and serve steamed or grilled veggies and salad on the table – for those who want seconds.
- If you indulge in a special food, schedule a bit more activity: make it your habit to take a couple of turns around the parking lot before and after work or shopping.

Registered and Licensed Dietitian Susan Burke March, MS, CDE, is a dynamic speaker, accomplished author, enthusiastic media representative and committed professional counselor dedicated to helping people learn strategies to improve their health and accomplish their weight goals. She is the author of *Making Weight Control Second Nature: Living Thin Naturally*, which offers a wealth of practical information, tips and strategies for people who are serious about taking control of their health, fad-free, for life. She may be reached online at www.SusanBurkeMarch.com.