

THE THREE 'R'S OF MINDFUL COOKING

By Melanie Wiebe, Registered Dietitian

One of the key steps to weight loss and good health is to be a Mindful Eater. Unless you have a personal chef, being a Mindful Eater also means learning to be a Mindful Cook. One of the easiest ways to accomplish this is to learn the Three 'R's of Mindful Cooking; replace, reduce and remove.

Let's face it. Fat, sugar and salt have a pleasing taste that is hard to resist. Some of your family's favorite foods are probably loaded with these 3 health hazards. But making healthy low-fat food choices doesn't mean you have to sacrifice taste. There are many ways to make delicious and flavorful foods by learning some simple cooking tricks.

One of the first steps to becoming a Mindful Chef is to learn to replace ingredients in your existing favorite recipes with healthier lower-fat choices without sacrificing taste. The first thing to do is go through your fridge and pantry and make notes of all the items that can be replaced with the lower fat and reduced salt versions. Sour cream can be replaced with low-fat or no-fat sour cream or plain low fat yogurt. Whipped cream can be replaced with chilled whipped evaporated skim milk or non-dairy whipped topping made with polyunsaturated fat. Butter can be replaced with soft tub margarine whose first ingredient is liquid vegetable oil. Most every day staple ingredients have a healthier version.

Learning to make simple changes in your ingredients will soon lead to changes in your waistline. By replacing mayonnaise on a sandwich to mustard you will save about 85 calories. Instead of 2 teaspoons butter (70 calories) on your toast change to 2 teaspoon of jam (35 calories) or 2 teaspoons no fat cream cheese (25 calories) If you make that change just 2 days a week for one year that adds up to over 3500 calories and 790 grams of fat. That's almost 12 days worth of fat!

Sometimes you can simply reduce the quantity of an ingredient in a recipe to create a lighter or healthier version. This involves looking over the recipe before you cook to see which items are highest in fat. Many times salt and sugar can successfully be reduced as well. Often the amount of meat used in meals can drastically be reduced.

Once you have successfully mastered replacing and reducing food items that are instrumental in adding unnecessary fat, salt and sugar to your diet, the next step is to attempt to move toward removing some of these items. Quite often salt can be completely eliminated from a recipe. Gradually remove the sugar from your morning coffee or tea. Try pasta without the meatballs. The trick is to do it gradually so your family adjusts to the taste.

Being a Mindful Chef means being willing to experiment and enjoy the process of cooking as much as you enjoy eating. You will soon see that by reducing, replacing and removing ingredients you can still enjoy your favorite foods and have fun doing it.

Penticton Registered Dietitian, Melanie Wiebe, and local caterer Derrie Selles have teamed up to offer “the Mindful Chef” series of healthy cooking classes being offered at Penticton Secondary School sponsored by City Centre Health and Fitness. These classes will focus not only on introducing tasty low fat, low salt recipes but also techniques for cooking with spices, vegetarian cooking and make ahead meals for busy cooks.

For more information on the “Mindful Chef” cooking classes, the Medical Weight Loss Program or private dietitian sessions contact City Center Health and Fitness 250-487-1481