



EATING SOULFULLY & HEALTHFULLY IN THE NEW YEAR

By Constance Brown Riggs, MEd., RD, CDE, CDN

If you're like most people, you ushered in the new year a few pounds heavier and with feelings of guilt, frustration and even a little depression. And those with diabetes might have blood glucose levels that are out of control. Your first thought is, "I can't believe I let this happen," as you struggle to put on those slacks that just won't zip up. Your second thought is about resolutions. You resolve to eat better, exercise more, lose some weight and get your diabetes under control.

But as you rush into these resolutions, be careful

not to fall into what some health professionals call resolution dissolution. One survey suggests that approximately 70 percent of people keep their New Year's resolutions into February and only 20 percent maintain these resolutions into June or longer. People fail at keeping New Year's resolutions fail because they make them without preparing for the changes. They depend strictly on willpower, which is only a short-term fix for change. Instead, you need to focus on starting small, setting realistic goals and planning your strategy.

Starting small means setting a major goal for

the year and breaking it into smaller, realistic goals; otherwise, you are likely to get discouraged, which can lead to early failure. Planning will make it more likely that you will follow through with your goal. Anticipating problems or pitfalls that could derail your efforts can help you deal with those problems as you go along. For instance, if you know that you eat junk food when you are bored, you can plan to stop bringing it into the house.

Think of your resolutions as a pact you made with yourself. Better yet, create a contract that states your goals and sign it. When you write it down, you are not just showing a desire for something, you are making a promise to yourself.

Researchers have found that people who make resolutions and succeed have the same number of slip-ups as those who resolve and fail. In other words, if you should fall off the horse, dust off the dirt, get right back up and start over.

One simple resolution you can make that will lead to greater gains is to "eat healthfully." This resolution can be broken down into smaller goals throughout the year. In the following list, you will find 12 small, healthy-eating tips. Aim to follow one tip each week or month until the list is mastered. Start today toward the goal of eating soulfully and healthfully in the new year.

1. Enjoy hearty soup dishes without all the fat. Add beans, low-fat meats and low-fat cheese, and grains such as barley or bulgur. Don't forget the vegetables. You can start by making a wonderful black-eyed pea and mushroom soup.

2. Eat small, frequent meals. You should eat your meals within 4 hours of a meal and within 2 hours of a snack. This helps to control your blood glucose levels and control hunger.

3. Increase fiber by choosing whole-grain breads and cereals. Eat at least three servings of whole-grain products per day. Brown rice, buckwheat, oatmeal, whole-wheat bread and, of course, corn bread are good sources of fiber.

4. Eat only at the table. Never eat while watching TV, reading or working. When you do other things while you eat, you are eating mindlessly, which can lead to overeating.

5. Follow the 50/25/25 rule. That is, fill 50 percent of your plate with vegetables, 25 percent with whole grains and the other 25 percent with protein (fish, poultry or meat).

6. Avoid sugary drinks like soda or sweetened tea. Opt for non-caloric drinks, like water or seltzer, every day. One can of regular soda has about 40 grams of sugar (or about four tablespoons) and about 160 calories a day. This can wreak havoc on your blood glucose levels and prevent weight loss.

7. Eat fish two or more times a week. Bake, grill, broil or dry fry your favorites instead of deep-

frying. Love catfish? Try the Cornmeal-Crusted Catfish recipe.

8. Increase your fruit intake by one a day. Fresh peaches, mangos, papaya, pineapple or oranges all contain fiber and many vitamins and minerals and can satisfy your sweet tooth. If you have diabetes, limit fruit to no more than three to four servings daily.

9. Switch from whole-milk products to low-fat or fat-free milk products. You can do this slowly, over the course of the month. Milk, yogurt and cheese give you calcium needed for healthy bones, and some studies suggest that calcium will help you lose weight.

10. Add nuts to your diet. Yes, nuts are high in fat. But did you know that the fat in nuts is "good" fat? This "good" fat (monounsaturated fat) lowers your bad cholesterol, which in turn reduces your risk of heart disease. Sprinkle chopped walnuts on your oatmeal or add peanuts to your salad for extra crunch.

11. Go green. Transform your favorite high-fat vegetable recipe into a low-fat, healthier version. Cook greens in a low-fat or fat-free broth. Instead of seasoning with salt pork, which adds more than 20 grams of fat, try smoked turkey for a similar flavor and less fat.

12. Eat healthier pork. Try pork tenderloin, which is as lean as chicken breast but has all the flavor of pork. Avoid sausage and ribs.

Cornmeal-Crusted Catfish (Serves 4)

1 pound catfish filets
1/2 cup cornmeal
4 tb. crushed pecans
1 tsp. paprika
1 1/2 tsp. garlic powder
2 tsp. minced onion
1/2 tsp. pepper
1 tsp. salt
3 tb. light mayonnaise
2 tb. apricot preserves
Cooking spray

1. Mix together cornmeal, crushed pecans, paprika, garlic powder, onion, pepper and salt and lightly toast in a skillet.
2. Mix together mayonnaise and apricot preserves and smear on catfish.
3. Press spices completely into catfish.
4. Spray a skillet with cooking spray and heat until hot, then lower flame and continue to heat.
5. Place catfish in hot skillet and brown on one side.
6. Carefully turn and brown other side.

Nutrient information: 230 calories, 18 grams protein, 23 grams carbohydrate, 6.6 grams fat, 61 milligrams cholesterol, 718 milligrams sodium ■