

WHAT'S GOOD TO EAT?!



San Francisco Free Clinic * Nutrition Newsletter
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Nutrition Matters

Calling All Cooks!

Cooking is THE cornerstone of healthy eating. Regularly preparing meals allows you the flexibility and control to eat well.



- * **Flexibility:** having food prepped accommodates the inevitable schedule changes and last minute tasks of life without forcing you to turn to convenience and ready to eat foods.
- * **Control:** you determine the portion size and the proportion of vegetables to starchy foods to protein; you also control the added fat, sugar, and salt. When you are the cook, your health is in your hands.

There are many reasons people struggle to make their own food, but most boil down (haha) to our modern overscheduled lives. There is just no time. Other reasons I hear:

- The food doesn't taste good.
- I don't know how or what to make
- It takes too long
- I don't like grocery shopping
- Food goes bad in my fridge before I use it

Cooking should be an enjoyable and relaxing activity. This is hard to achieve if you are tired and hungry from a long day. Why not re-imagine cooking as a hobby that you enjoy throughout the week instead of a last-minute, stressful charge to get something on the table? Here's how:

- **Plan, plan, plan.** Make a weekly schedule of meals. Include family members in the planning. Bring this on your grocery trip.
- **Get inspired.** Find a food blog or cookbook you like and pick a few new recipes to try out.
- **Keep it simple.** You don't have to eat like a chef. Make a flavorful sauce and cook your food with care. Try "Building a Beautiful Bowl" below.
- **Build your skills.** Make at least three meals that you enjoy repeatedly until you don't need to follow the recipe. These will be your go-to meals. Always have the ingredients in your kitchen for your go-to meals so you can easily prep a meal.
- **Enjoy leftovers.** Few have the time to cook every meal fresh.
- **Cook when you have time.** Make large batches of food on the weekends or cook your beans and grains for the week to add to freshly cooked protein and vegetables.



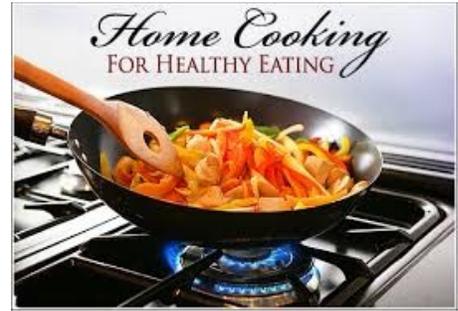
Want to read more? Visit our dietitian's AMAZING blog at sffcdietitian.wordpress.com

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the next page



News Bites

A study from 2014 out of Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health confirmed that regular cooking resulted in healthier eating. With over 9,000 participants, they found that less than half of respondents cooked dinner regularly. Those who did cook at home consumed less sugar, simple carbohydrates, fat, and calories.



The take-away:

Cooking is an “anchor habit” that can profoundly improve your diet. These types of habits need regular reinforcement but can become woven into your routine, supporting an overall healthy lifestyle that will increase your energy, improve your sleep, and decrease your risk for chronic disease.



HOW TO BUILD A BEAUTIFUL BOWL

Choose one or more items from each of the categories below- mix and match, experiment with your food and have fun.

Protein

- **Beans and legumes:** canned or dried beans of any variety. Lentils are quick-cooking and versatile. If cooking dried beans, soaking overnight will decrease the cooking time. Boost flavor by adding herbs, spices, onions, carrots, and/or celery to the cooking water.
- **Chicken and fish-**roasted, grilled, steamed... you pick the cooking technique. If you purchase already cooked meats, watch out for added sauces, which can be high in salt, fat, sugar and additives.
- **Tofu/tempeh-** can be easily cooked in the same simple manner as chicken and fish.

Vegetable

- **Roasting** veggies brings out the flavor and sweetness. Try it with broccoli, Brussel

sprouts, cabbage, sweet potatoes, asparagus, and carrots. Just chop into bite sized pieces, toss with oil and your choice of seasonings, turn up the oven to 425 and let them cook until crisp and tender (10-20 minutes depending on the vegetable).

- **Go raw:** using a vegetable peeler on carrots, asparagus, butternut squash, beets, sweet potatoes creates long thin strips of crunchy veggies that will add a nice texture to your bowl. Or shred some cabbage, thin slice some kale or chard. No need to cook!

Grain

- Use a variety of whole grains to get all your nutrient needs met – avoid refined grains whenever possible. Add flavorings to the cooking water (like with beans above), pre-soak to cut down cooking time if you like to plan ahead. Once cooked, grains can be eaten hot or cold.
- Brown rice, wild rice, quinoa, millet, buckwheat, bulgur, wheat berries, spelt, amaranth

Sauces/ flavorings

- Avocado, vinaigrette, miso dressings (see below), plain yogurt, sriracha sauce, pickled or fermented vegetables, roasted or raw nuts/seeds.
- Make your own dressing: whisk 1 Tablespoon miso or nut butter with 2 Tablespoons lemon or lime juice. Really, it's that simple- increase the portion as needed. Add more flavor if you like: minced garlic/ ginger/ jalapeno or diced herbs.