

Lifestyle Changes = Fun Foods for Summer

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When I went to the doctor on November 24, 2010, I had no idea that the visit would begin my current lifestyle change. I had headaches and felt sluggish and tired all the time. After getting my blood pressure and weight results, there was no wonder. In fact, I was surprised I was able to get out of bed and in to see the doctor. The bottom line was that I would need to make better food choices and exercise more in order live and be healthy enough to see my grandchildren (Mikkel, age 8, and Mikalah, age 4) graduate from college.

At almost 60 (in 2012), I have my share of aches and pains. I've been diagnosed with a chronic condition and take multiple medications daily, but I want to live a full and exciting life. This doctor's visit was a wakeup call and I discovered some changes must be made. I had to make an immediate choice because the next day was Thanksgiving.

I began by calling my extended family to tell them I was opting out of Thanksgiving dinner. I cooked but stayed home to contemplate my next moves toward a healthier lifestyle that would include movement and better food choices.

Next, I went to the refrigerator and freezer and began throwing out all of the foods that were not in line with the new choices I would be making. Out went the ice creams (all three flavors), pies, cookie dough, etc. Then I opened the cabinets and threw away the comfort foods that were waiting for their next visit from my never ending appetite.

I made a shopping list of food selections that are healthy, easily prepared and tasty. I also devised a plan for movement that would involve walking a minimum of 15 minutes per day. This could be a walk around Fred Meyer, the mall or Bed, Bath and Beyond (which is where I met the man who became my husband in March 2011). The goal was to get my body moving so my metabolism would speed up. And one of the results was to find love again. That's another story, for another time.

This was not my first time tackling weight so I knew basics that would work for me. The first thing: never to use the word "diet." I learned that years ago from Richard Simmons, who created a program called "Live It" because he realized the only way to maintain a healthy body weight is to have a lifestyle change. He didn't like the word "diet" because it contained the word "die."

A lifestyle change has helped me lose 50 pounds and six dress sizes since last Thanksgiving. When asked "how did you do it?" my answer is always the same. I cut salt, white sugar, white bread, white pasta, and white potatoes from my meals. When I go out to eat I bring most of the meal home and it

becomes two or three small meals instead of one large meal. I try to go to the gym three times per week but, if I don't make it, I still walk 15 minutes per day. And most of all — I decided to have fun!

I'd like to share with you a few ideas for fun summer foods from Gwendolyn's Kitchen:



Breakfast: 3 Egg-white Omelet

(1 tsp olive oil, 1 tsp butter, ¼ cup spinach, ¼ cup tomatoes (diced), 2-3 egg whites, ¼ cup mushrooms (sliced), low-fat cheese, pinch of salt, pinch of pepper)

Heat olive oil and butter in an 8" omelet pan. Add spinach, tomato, and mushrooms to sauté. Whisk egg whites until foamy. Add egg whites to pan, swirling pan to create a thin edge on the outside of the egg mixture. After the egg sets, add a little low-fat cheese and fold onto plate (only turn it over if you're a pro). Add salt and pepper, if you must.



Lunch: BBQ Turkey Burger

(ground turkey, 1 T BBQ sauce, 1 tsp mustard, sweet and tangy BBQ seasoning, salt, pepper, 2% American cheese, skinny wheat buns, sliced tomato, lettuce, pickle)

Season ground turkey with 1 BBQ sauce, mustard, BBQ seasoning, salt, and pepper. Make several patties and put them on the grill. When done, put on a bun and add cheese, tomato, lettuce, pickle, and condiments of your choice.



Frozen Fruit Tea

(grapes, mango balls, strawberries, watermelon balls, tea, artificial sweetener)

Combine fruits and freeze overnight. Place frozen fruit in a glass and add tea and artificial sweetener to taste. Yummm. You can continue to add tea or allow fruit to melt. Double yummm.



Dinner: Zelly's Salad (from daughter-in-law Zelly's Kitchen)

(lettuce, carrot shavings, boiled eggs, cherry tomatoes, sliced mushrooms, Persian cucumbers, avocado, blue cheese crumbles, black pepper, onion powder, paprika)

Arrange ingredients on plate. Enjoy!

Rev. Gwendolyn Phillips Dotson is the founder and executive director of Another Chance For Life, a nonprofit organization; host of Another Chance Women's Conference & Sister's Summit; founder and president of God Answers Prayer Ministries; and a preacher, revivalist, vocalist, author, and workshop presenter.