

THAT ALMOST FORGOTTEN, “MAGICAL” PLACE – YOUR KITCHEN

“My kitchen...magical? I don't think so,” a patient recently stated to me when I mentioned to her that in her house there was a place of comfort and ease; a place where she could be in control and no one could tell her what to do. I reassured her that it was magical because – she could not only eat great; but, she could grow healthier and wealthier just by spending more time there. Best of all, it's a place where you can eat all of your favorite foods and still lose weight!

Ever since September/2008, when our American economy hit the reset button, things have changed – a lot. People have become more determined to spend their hard earned money more wisely. Many individuals are actually starting to take a second look at going out to eat as frequently. In 2008, 28 percent of Americans said they had visited a fine-dining restaurant in the past month. In 2009, that figure dropped to just 19 percent. Somewhat hard to imagine when practically every restaurant in town is consistently filled at all hours; however, there are those families who are slowly changing their lifestyles. That's a good thing for their wallets, waistlines and their overall health. For most individuals there is a connection between the fast-food, drive-thru, pre-packaged take-out meals and their growing bellies and thinning wallets. What we have to remember is that our health is an accumulation of all of our daily habits. For anyone to expect their health to improve without changing anything, only creates frustration and worse; long-term health problems.

I also believe it's important to remember that it's never too late to get started on improving your health! Every mother who improves her own personal health will also, through a ripple effect, improve a willing spouses' health and her children's future health. That's why for most individuals, they can forget the count your points, pre-packaged food dieting programs, the need to join a gym or get some new exercise machine from QVC. What they need to do is cook and eat more at home. Literally!

I don't mean to say that you should avoid restaurants and prepared supermarket foods totally. “The Eat This, Not That!” series of books recently published certainly has helped people choose better supermarket foods and make better food swaps at their favorite restaurants. However, in many cases, the smartest swap you could make... is to prepare the food yourself. You won't need to deal with the super-size mentality of most restaurants or the enormous differences in calories between restaurant, supermarket and home-cooked food. It continually intrigues me when I review the completed paperwork for our, “Healthy Life by Design” program and how many meals are eaten at home and/or outside of the home. The number of meals not eaten at home is well over 50 percent for many individuals. Many of these same patients often skip breakfast. That would be like leaving on a family vacation without filling the gas tank in your car. We couldn't go far nor does your body go for long without energy!

Imagine, over the course of a week, the amount of calories you would save by eating a hamburger at home rather than at a restaurant. The average hamburger at a restaurant has 830 calories and 50 grams of fat; 16 grams which are saturated and the average home-cooked hamburger has 329 calories and 12 grams of fat; 4.5 grams that are saturated. Why such a dramatic discrepancy you may ask? In part, it has to do with the ingredients. In previous articles we've talked about how restaurants and food manufacturers/packagers mess with our taste buds by adding the fat, salt, sugar and some of the other 6000 FDA approved chemicals to our food. Another difference in the calories is the issue of the serving size. In 2008, USA Today found that people ate an estimated 107 more calories each time they chose to eat out instead of eating at home. A 2002 study looked at restaurant portion sizes and found that they far exceeded what they should or needed to be. By weighing foods, researchers found that compared with USDA portion sizes,

many foods ballooned considerably, such as: pasta, 480 percent oversized; steak, 224 percent oversized; and, hamburgers, 112 percent oversized to name only a few.

Understandably, if you didn't go to the restaurant; but, would rather not cook from scratch at home you'd still save a lot of calories and money by buying prepared foods from the supermarket – an estimated 1700 calories a week. But why lose only half the weight you want to by still purchasing pre-packaged food? Why spend more than you have to on the food that you are purchasing? Besides, why settle for something that was cooked by a stranger yesterday or based on if it's pre-packaged food and potentially cooked months ago?

It's easy to shave off the pounds and improve your health just by mastering a few simple cooking skills. So another question is, "Why don't we all do the cooking and eating at home thing?" That remains a mystery. One clear answer to solving that mystery is your definition of the term, "family dinner." This is a topic discussed early on in our program with my patients because although our main objective is to help patients change their physiology in order to improve their health and achieve weight loss – there is also a psychological component of changing your health that must be addressed. Changing your behavior and your resulting decisions requires you change the way you think. The term, "family dinner," almost always triggers the mental image of the traditional family sitting around the dining room table. This has been carved into our brains over decades by books, magazines, T.V. shows and movies. Some of us may even remember those dinners from our own past because our parents and grandparents hosted family meals in just that way. But many of today's "family dinners" don't really look like those that we've seen in the movies or conjure up in our mind's eye. A "family dinner" cooked at home is a rare commodity for many. When it was published that 1 out of 4 Americans eat their breakfast at McDonalds, we realized we are a society on the go! We are far more likely to go to a fast-food drive-thru, order a delivery meal, or heat up something that was prepared and/or packaged in a supermarket than we are to actually cook our own dinner from scratch.

In 1963, only 28.5 percent of our food dollars were spent on meals prepared outside the home. By 2006, it was nearly 49 percent – half of our money is being utilized for restaurant and supermarket prepared foods. So for many, it's not passing the bowl of home-made sweet potatoes; but, "Who gets the fries or who wants the tator tots?" This essentially means that we're not in control of our food intake nor our body's health. I realize that we can study the take-out menu and make better choices and I would certainly always recommend that; but, no matter how careful you are, you're still not in charge. Certainly, not the way you could or should be. Especially if you've given any thought to the cost of poor health; not only in dollars and cents; but, quality of life!

When you are in your own kitchen, creating your own meals, you are COMMANDER IN CHIEF of that territory! For those of you that frequently make a high percentage of your meals from more fresh and/or organic foods – I salute you! If you're not one of the few that creates your own meals -- I would prefer you take back command of your kitchen. You may have minor skirmishes with husband and children; especially, if they've been accustomed to the a la carte menus at a restaurant. However, the maternal feeling of taking back control of a situation (in this case, yours and your loved one's health) in and of itself would be enough for you to muster the energy to wave the dish towel victoriously. I would even consider tossing that dish towel to one of your children to create a different type of family time which includes job duties in the kitchen. Eventually... even cooking lessons from the kitchen Commander In Chief could be provided which creates family time, enhancement of a child's self-esteem and independence and a shared work load. That sounds like a good family group discussion!

In our next article, we will go through point by point all the positives you will gain by cooking things yourself and answer the matter for those of you who already, in your mind's eye, stated, "I don't have time to cook!"

For more information pertaining to our "Healthy Life by Design" program, please visit us on the web: www.naturalwellnesscentre.net. This article is authored by Dr. James R. Grilliot, a chiropractic physician and director of Natural Wellness Centre; phone number: 740-687-0279.