



Green Plate Kids
Yummy • Healthy • Plates to Go

Healthy and Happy 2011!

As the holidays are behind us and we begin to look toward a New Year, many of us will be making New Year's resolutions. One of the most popular resolutions is to lose weight. However, by the end of January, most people are bored of their new diets and gym memberships.

Why not make 2011 different? Instead of starting an elaborate diet that forces you to give up your favorite foods, start the New Year with a new resolution: to eat healthier. You do not need to give up entire food groups, nor should you. Carbs are not bad for you, fat is not destined to land on your thighs and overloading on protein is not the answer to a svelte figure. Like most things in life, moderation is the key element in a successful eating plan.

The healthiest diets in the world have fruits and vegetables at the core. You can eat a lot of fruits and vegetables and not worry about gaining weight. At the same time, you will be fortifying your body with natural vitamins, minerals and antioxidants. Fruits are the easiest snacks to pack for busy people on the go since many fruits have their own natural packaging. Vegetables can be easily prepared by steaming in the microwave or lightly sautéing in a pan with olive oil. Soups are another easy way to pack in extra veggies and there is nothing more satisfying than a steaming bowl of soup in the middle of winter.

Carbohydrates are an important part of our diet and have received a bad reputation in the last decade of high-protein diets. Incorporating whole grains into your diet will go a long way toward improving health. The added fiber will both satisfy your appetite and keep blood sugar levels in check so that your energy level is more stable. Be sure to look for the words "whole wheat" as the first ingredient on the bread you purchase. Try out new grains that are as easy to prepare as pasta, such as quinoa and bulgur wheat. And, of course, save sugary treats for special occasions.

Protein is an essential component of our diet but should not be the main component. Use meat as more of a condiment for flavor. Incorporate more fish into your diet so that you can increase your intake of omega 3 fatty acids. Experiment with beans and vegetarian dishes. You can get protein in many ways that will excite your taste buds and keep you from the "diet doldrums."

Fat is another important component of your diet. We need fat to survive but, like carbohydrates, some fats are better than others. We have all heard by now that trans fats are not good for you and should be avoided entirely. Saturated fats are those fats that are solid at room temperature, like butter and fat on meat. Both trans and saturated fats are the artery clogging kind, which is why lean cuts of meat are better for you since they contain less of the saturated fat. Monounsaturated and polyunsaturated fats are the "good fats." These fats are found in vegetable oils and nuts. Don't be afraid to enjoy food cooked with these unsaturated fats. Just remember that a little goes a long way.

Keep your diet filled with fruits, vegetables, whole grains, lean meats, low-fat dairy, fish, nuts and beans. Your appetite and your taste buds will be satisfied while your waistline naturally will get smaller and, more importantly, you will optimize your health.

