

healthy cooking

46 Recipes Under 30 Minutes

AUGUST 2004

SIMPLE SOLUTIONS • HEALTHY ALTERNATIVES



great tastes of summer

crowd-pleasing recipes for backyard get-togethers

fresh fruit desserts capture the flavors of summer

plus

salads, seafood, burgers and tofu, too!

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guest chef devin alexander

Devin Alexander is the owner and executive chef of Cafe Renée Catering in Los Angeles. Twelve years ago she lost 55 pounds and has kept it off. She specializes in cooking and teaching lowfat, high-flavor, scrumptious cuisine. She is one of the experts on HGTV's "Smart Solutions" and has catered more than 600 parties and events, including those for Reba McEntire and the Green Room of "The Late Show with Craig Kilborn". As an assistant teacher at the Westlake Culinary Institute, she has worked with Julia Child, Graham Kerr, Martin Yan, Paul Prudhomme and Hugh Carpenter, to name a few. Her first cookbook should be available shortly. She shares her tips for healthy eating with us.

When did you become interested in healthy eating?

I was interested in healthy eating from a young age. In my early 20s I figured out that I didn't have to white knuckle myself away from my favorite foods if I just learned to prepare them differently. That's when interest turned to action.

How did you lose the weight and keep it off?

I lost the weight by eating more moderate portions of healthier foods and working out.

Did you make any major changes?

In 1987, I resolved never to eat fried or fast food again, with the exception of a few salads at fast food restaurants while traveling. I've stuck to that.

What is your approach to healthy eating?

One of the worst things anyone can do is buy into the diet crazes. They're called crazes because they make us crazy. Years ago, the grocery stores were filled with fat-free products that were supposedly the answer to making all of America healthy. We've now moved into the low-carb phase which may feel like it's going to last, but 10 years from now, everyone will be trying something else – hopefully eating in moderation.

Is that what you try to do?

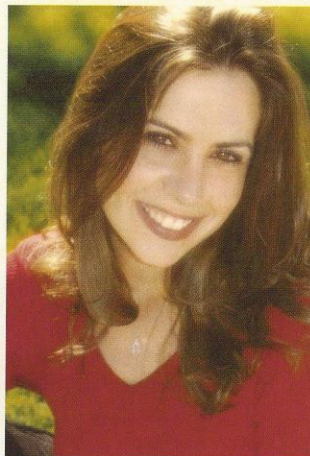
Yes. I had tried every diet known from the time I was eight until I was 21 to no avail. Diets set up a deprivation cycle that causes people to overeat. When I learned to listen to my body to know when I was hungry and when I was full, I no longer had a need to diet.

How can people stay on the healthy eating track?

By sticking with the foods that we know are fundamentally good for us. If you're having a strong craving for a food you know you shouldn't have every day, either indulge in a little of it or learn to cook it in a healthier way.

Are there easy ways to makeover recipes?

Making over recipes is a lot simpler than people might think. I was



never formally taught how to cook healthy, per se. I see each makeover as a puzzle or a challenge to be solved. A lot of it is simply trial and error, but there are some common substitutions that can help people.

What are they?

One method has to do with frying. I was the hugest fan of fried food when I was overweight, so unfrying was something I was determined to master.

What is "unfrying"?

Basically, you bread the meat or vegetables with flour (you can use whole-wheat pastry flour), egg whites, instead of whole eggs, then bread crumbs (again, you can use whole wheat bread crumbs, as long as they are not too grainy). Then you bake the foods at a high temperature so the juices are locked in and the outside crisps.

What are other ways to make recipes healthier?

You can substitute ground turkey breast meat in any of your favorite ground beef or pork recipes. Sometimes you may need to add a little moisture, such as an egg white to keep the meat tender since it doesn't have as much fat as beef or pork.

Can people have their carbs and lose weight, too?

Yes! If you cut all carbs, you might lose weight at first, but you're also putting yourself at risk for health issues. My suggestion is to restrict the intake of sugar and white flour. That alone can make a huge difference.

What about dining out?

My favorite is sushi (without too much rice) because as long as I order sushi rolls without mayonnaise, I know the chef hasn't added hidden fat to it. But dining out is a problem.

What are ways to get kids to more vegetables and less junk food?

Kids will eat what is there. If you have a fresh bowl of strawberries hulled and sitting on the table when they come home, they're likely to eat them. Plus, you can create some tasty snacks and appetizers using whole wheat tortillas, thinly sliced deli turkey meat and spinach or arugula. Roll it up and slice it. Also, buy baked snacks, if you have to buy them at all.

Tell us about your cookbook.

It's going to be about healthy, comfort food that includes quirky stories, as told from the perspective of a formerly overweight girl now living in Hollywood.

Where can we learn more of your tips and tricks for healthy eating?

My web site is www.devinalexander.com. I have all kinds of information on it, as well as recipes.