

Healthy eating can be a pleasure

What if somebody offered you something guaranteed to improve your physical and mental energy without breaking your budget? Too good to be true, right?

Maybe.

Good nutrition can deliver all that and more. What you eat affects the way you move, the way you think, even the way your medication does its job. It also plays a significant role in cutting the risk of accidents and illness.

Keeping on top of good nutrition requires some commitment, but this is a good time to resolve to make it part of your life. As noted in The Star's Food section this week, March is Nutrition Month and helping seniors to find ways of taking pleasure in eating healthily is one of the biggest goals.

If you've been living primarily on tea and biscuits or toast, your health and outlook on life is undoubtedly suffering. Decide now to explore ways of getting help with shopping, ways of making cooking and food preparation feel worth the trouble, ways of helping spread the word to others.

According to a study done by the nutrition support team at Montreal's Jewish General Hospital, 68 per cent of seniors over age 65 consume 1,000 calories or less a day, well below their recommended daily calorie intake (2,000 calories for men, 1,700 for women). The same study also showed that poor nutrition leads to increased readmission to hospital and that people with a chronic, underlying illness who eat poorly are twice as likely to die from complications than those with adequate nutrition.

That study is quoted by SPRINT (Senior Peoples' Resources in North Toronto), which runs a community dining program in partnership with the Toronto public health and parks departments, Parkdale Golden Age Foundation and POINT (People and Organizations in North Toronto).

Community meals mean much more than enjoying good food; they're also a great way to meet people.

Twenty years ago, the SPRINT program, which can be reached at (416) 481-6411, offered lunch at one location twice a week, serving some 60 meals a month. Today, with



HELPING HANDS: Volunteers pack Field to Table's fruit and vegetables for seniors.

Age of Reason

HELEN HENDERSON



four participating locations, it offers a choice of breakfast, lunch, dinner and brunch at various times, and serves an average of 700 meals a month.

How do you find out about community dining programs, meals on wheels, ways to share shopping, cooking and/or mealtimes, or whatever would make it easier for you to eat healthily?

One of the best ways is to call the FoodLink hotline at (416) 392-6655. The hotline, a joint project of Community Information Toronto and FoodShare, has information on seniors' community dining programs, community kitchens and gardens, low-cost meals, nutrition workshops and a number of other projects related to healthy eating.

It's part of the same group that operates Field to Table, a non-profit produce distributor that offers a "Reach for Five" box of fresh, ready-to-eat and ready-to-cook fruit and pre-cut vegetables, put together with seniors in mind.

Field to Table is like a big buying co-operative designed to help people get together with neighbours to save money on top-quality food. This week, manager Mary Lou Morgan

was one of two winners of the Jane Jacobs Prize for helping to make Toronto a vital place.

The Reach for Five box, which costs \$10, contains 30 servings, divided into manageable pieces and delivered through neighbourhood drop-off points, including community centres, co-ops and apartment buildings. If you were buying individually, you'd probably have to spend closer to \$20 or \$25 to get what comes packed in the box.

Field to Table buys directly from farmers and from the Ontario Food Terminal. Volunteers pack individual boxes, each containing the same mix of produce. The contents vary, depending on the best fruit and vegetables available and feedback from customers.

Included in the box is a newsletter, with cooking tips, recipes and nutrition news.

If you eat the contents of the box, you will have met 75 per cent of the recommended minimum of five servings of fruits and vegetables per day.

Many people who get a box trade among themselves after it has been delivered. If you're not keen on carrots, for example, you might trade with someone willing to give up celery.

Any group of five or more people buying one box each qualifies as a drop-off point. The only other stipulation is that one person volunteer to act as co-ordinator, placing orders and accepting delivery.

To find the nearest drop-off point for you, phone Lee Hanna at (416) 363-6441, extension 29. If there's no group in your area, Hanna could help you get

one started and answer any questions you may have.

One other thing that might come in handy in the interests of healthy eating is a free booklet from the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture.

Called *Common Sense Nutrition For Seniors*, it looks at, among other things, special nutritional needs, the best time for taking medication, food safety and storage, and how to make the most of a microwave oven.

Written in consultation with the seniors' wellness group at the South Riverdale Community Centre, the book also has quick, easy recipes for everything from healthy juice nogs and hamburger soup to speedy stew, skillet meatloaf and cheese applesauce squares.

If you'd like a copy, contact the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs at (519) 826-3700 in the Guelph area, or at 1-888-466-2372.

Chicken speaks Italian

Chicken "hunter-style" was one of the mainstays of Italian restaurants in North America back in the red sauce days. And it is still a family favourite.

Unlike most of the '50s-type recipes, this one from *The Dean & DeLuca Cookbook* (Random House is closer to the simpler version served in Italy.

Chicken Cacciatore

Chicken, cut into 8 pieces (about 4 lb/2 kg)

3 tbsp olive oil

1 tsp salt

¼ tsp ground black pepper

1 medium onion, cut into slivers (about 1½ cups)

3 garlic cloves, thinly sliced

2 large carrots, sliced into ¼-inch pieces

2 stalks celery, sliced into ½-inch pieces

¾ cup red wine

2 tsp fresh thyme or ½ tsp dried

½ tsp chopped fresh rosemary or pinch dried

1 bay leaf

Pinch dried red pepper flakes (optional)

28 oz (796 mL) can crushed tomatoes

1 tbsp lemon juice

¼ cup chopped fresh flat-leaf parsley

Wash and dry chicken pieces. In deep skillet large enough to hold all the chicken, heat 2 tablespoons oil over moderately high heat. When oil is hot, sprinkle chicken with ¼ teaspoon salt and the pepper. Sauté until golden, about 3 to 4

Weekend Chef

MARY McGRATH



minutes. Set aside.

Add remaining oil, then onion, garlic, carrots, celery and ¼ teaspoon salt. Sauté until nicely browned, about 5 minutes.

Increase heat to high. Slowly add wine, scraping bottom of pan with wooden spoon to remove any caramelized bits. Cook until ¾ of wine has evaporated, about 5 minutes.

Add thyme, rosemary, bay leaf, red pepper flakes (if desired), tomatoes, lemon juice and remaining salt. Stir well, bring to boil, then reduce heat to simmer.

Return chicken to pan, spooning sauce over each piece. Cook, covered, 12 minutes, then remove breast pieces. Cook remaining chicken, covered, 15 minutes, then remove.

Reduce sauce over high heat for 6 to 8 minutes, until thickened. Remove bay leaf. Return chicken to pan and heat through. Adjust seasoning.

Arrange chicken on large serving plate. Cover generously with sauce. Sprinkle with chopped parsley.

Makes 4 to 6 servings.

Wine suggestion: Try a favourite red wine such as Chianti Classico.

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