

From the Heart...

...Lifeskills for Today's Family
By Sharon L. Benedict MS



Summertime Meals – Light & Cool, part 1

(published in Boerne Star, Friday, Aug 1, 2014)

With the summertime heat, do you wonder what to fix for meals that cool you off and are lighter on the digestion? Also, who wants to heat up your house during the heat of the summer? So, let's look at some fun ways to keep it light and cool.

Let's start with hearty salads and vegetables (including grains). Some recipes offered include ingredients you may not be familiar with. Give yourself the opportunity to get acquainted with these items for some great summer dishes. Any favorites at your house? Here are some from 101cookbooks.com that always spark my cooking imagination. I often pass them to my husband, John, who is really THE CHEF in our home and creates some awesome dishes himself.

Honey Balsamic Bean Salad, <http://www.101cookbooks.com/archives/honey-balsamic-bean-salad-recipe.html>. For those who love beans, this one should do the job, with cooked chickpeas, pinto beans, and black beans. My husband especially loves the chickpeas (or garbanzo, as some call them). I love substituting pinto for red beans myself.

Black Pepper Cauliflower Salad, <http://www.101cookbooks.com/archives/black-pepper-cauliflower-salad-recipe.html>. I particularly love this one with all its ingredients, such as tossed nuts, apples, olives, and a bit of feta. I love pecans and walnuts the most, but sliced almonds are great too. Just roast the nuts for a few minutes in a pan (not oven to keep house staying cool) and toss to give the salad an even better taste.

Shredded Egg Salad, <http://www.101cookbooks.com/archives/shredded-egg-salad-recipe.html>. For those who don't particularly like radicchio, give diced raw, red cabbage a try.

Millet Croquettes, <http://www.101cookbooks.com/archives/millet-croquettes-recipe.html>. I think I will give this one a try. My husband taught me how to cook millet so that it is fluffy and delicious when added to recipes. And this one sounds like a winner to me.

Baked (or skillet) Quinoa Patties, <http://www.101cookbooks.com/archives/baked-quinoa-patties-recipe.html>. I love quinoa and use it in all kind of bread, pancake, salad dishes. Here's one you may love too.

Silverdollar Socca Pancakes, <http://www.101cookbooks.com/archives/silverdollar-socca-recipe.html>. I have never made this recipe. Wonder if it is as good as they say? If you decide to give it a try, send your response my way. I consider this one a vegetable dish.

Olive Oil Braised Spring Vegetables, <http://www.101cookbooks.com/archives/olive-oil-braised-spring-vegetables-recipe.html>. If you really like potatoes and carrots, with asparagus thrown in, give this one a try.

Next article will cover cold soups and desserts. You can find all kinds of tasty summer recipes yourself at <http://www.101cookbooks.com/summer/>, and <http://www.goodhousekeeping.com/recipes/easy/quick-summer-dinner-recipes#slide-1>.

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From the Heart...

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Summertime Meals – Light & Cool, part 2

(published in Boerne Star, Friday, Aug 8, 2014)

After offering some hearty salad and vegetable recipes in part one, let's move on to cold soups and desserts. Again, you can find all kinds of tasty summer recipes yourself at <http://www.101cookbooks.com/summer/>, and <http://www.goodhousekeeping.com/recipes/> Just type in search field "summer recipes." Here are a few that caught my eye.

Leek Soup with Dill Oil, <http://www.101cookbooks.com/archives/leek-soup-with-dill-oil-recipe.html>. I haven't tried this one, but it sounds awesome. You can actually freeze this soup after letting it cool completely. And I would add a little cooked millet, quinoa, or brown rice to the soup. Yummy! Check out their hints on how to make this soup taste even better. One is to top it with green dill oil and crunchy toasted almonds. The other tip is to cook together the leeks, potatoes, garlic, etc., then add broth.

Summer Vegetable Curry (soup using coconut milk), <http://www.101cookbooks.com/archives/summer-vegetable-curry-recipe.html>. For those who love curry and cilantro, this one just might be perfect for you. They even give you a recipe to make your own curry paste (Thai Green Curry Paste). It's packed with veggies, such as shallots, green or yellow beans, broccoli, even tofu. Yet, if you aren't crazy for tofu, be creative with a substitute, such as quinoa containing all nine essential amino acids. And if waxy potatoes aren't your thing, throw in some yummy cooked basmati brown rice. I use Lungberg basmati brown rice for its wonderful nutty flavor, almost like popcorn fragrance when cooking.

Ginger Coconut Milk Soup, <http://www.101cookbooks.com/archives/ginger-coconut-milk-soup-recipe.html>. Here' another recipe that uses coconut milk. One of the tips is to simmer grated ginger and shallots in coconut milk and add the brightest spring vegetables you can get your hands on, served over egg noodles (or, alternately, pan-fried shredded yuba skins*). Think about also adding some cilantro and a squeeze of lime, or any other fresh herbs you have handy.

Red Fruit Salad, <http://www.101cookbooks.com/archives/red-fruit-salad-recipe.html>. Instead of using brown sugar, I like using a little pure maple syrup and cinnamon. Since cinnamon enhances the sweetness of fruit, you never need to use much sweeteners at all. This is particularly the case when the fruit is sweet enough on its own.

Almond Milk Fruit Sherbet. This is one is my own recipes for something cold and naturally sweet during a hot summer evening. My grandson loves it! This works well for those who have allergies to dairy products as well. You can easily use your favorite fruits. One trick so you don't have to use an ice cream maker is to use frozen fruit. Frozen unsweetened cherries, strawberries, bananas, and mangos are my favorites.

Feel free to add some plain low-fat yogurt to turn it into a smoothie or close second to ice cream. If you want it sweeter, add ½ teaspoon cinnamon and a couple more tablespoons of sweetener. You can always use sweetened almond milk or give some form of stevia a try for sweetening without the added calories. I use Truvia brand. It seems to have the least aftertaste of them all.

Here's the recipe you can play with: 2 cups unsweetened almond milk; 1 tsp. vanilla extract; 10 cherry, pitted, frozen, chopped; 10 strawberries, frozen, chopped; 1 banana; 1/4 cup honey or maple syrup (optional: ½ cup yogurt, ½ teaspoon cinnamon). Use a hand-held puree machine to thoroughly combine into a soft sherbet or thick smoothie. If it doesn't seem thick enough, add more frozen fruit. It freezes well. When you take it out of the freezer, simply

microwave for no more than 30 seconds to soften enough to scoop out. If necessary, you can then do a quick puree to refresh for serving.

Again, if you are not familiar with some of the ingredients listed, by all means give them a try. Find a friend who has used them and have fun being creative together. May these recipes keep you *light and cool* in these last fast flying few weeks of summertime.

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Trendy Healthy Foods 2014, part 1

(published in Boerne Star, Friday, Aug 15, 2014)

What have you seen lately in the grocery store or your local restaurants? Notice any trend changes? Possibly, you have seen more salad choices, more vegetarian type dishes among the standard high calorie fair of steak, potatoes, and deep dish chocolate cake or peach cobbler. Hard to stay away from the latter right? Yet, maybe this kind of variety will make you feel less guilty when you choose the low cal the next time, right?

There are supposedly six healthy food trends happening this year. Jessie Price, Editor-in-Chief, EatingWell magazine offers “6 Top Healthy Food Trends for 2014.” The first being “Clean eating is the new buzzword for healthy.” Healthy eating seems to continue and leads is the craze for “...everything ‘clean.’” Price states it simply “...means eating more vegetables, less meat, less sodium, watching your alcohol, limiting processed foods and choosing whole grains. Really—only basic stuff.

The second trend is “Trash fish is the new sustainable seafood.” Trash fish simply means fish that isn’t popular like cod, halibut or salmon. After the fisherman caught those “trash” fish, they actually throw them back or turn them into fertilizer. Price lists some of those underappreciated species, such as wolf eel and sea robin. Chefs across the US are creating “...delicious “trash-fish dinners” to showcase just how delectable these fish can be. The aim: to get Americans eating a wider range of seafood and to protect the overall balance of fish populations in our oceans.”

The third trend is “Cauliflower is the new “it” vegetable.” While other vegetable chips, such as kale chips, are seen everywhere now, Price sees cauliflower as “...the up-and-coming darling vegetable of the moment. And for good reason—it’s loaded with nutrients and can do all sorts of culinary tricks, from standing in for starchier, higher-calorie potatoes in dishes to turning a soup creamy and rich without any cream.

Are you now wondering what the other three trends might be? Here are a few hints to whet your appetite for part 2 article. Trend four starts with a “k” and is similar to quinoa. Trend five can get really ripe resulting in pungent smells and tastes. Trend six brings benefits to your community. See you next Friday.

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Trendy Healthy Foods 2014, part 2

(published in Boerne Star, Friday, Aug 22, 2014)

Ever wonder what the trends are for healthy foods being served up in your grocery stores and restaurants. In the previous article, there are supposedly six healthy food trends happening this year. Jessie Price, Editor-in-Chief, EatingWell magazine offers “6 Top Healthy Food Trends for 2014.” The first being “Clean eating is the new buzzword for healthy.” Price states it simply “...means eating more vegetables, less meat, less sodium, watching your alcohol, limiting processed foods and choosing whole grains. Really—only basic stuff.

The second trend is “Trash fish is the new sustainable seafood.” Trash fish simply means fish that isn’t popular. Price lists some of those underappreciated species, such as wolf eel and sea robin. Chefs across the US are creating “...delicious “trash-fish dinners” to showcase just how delectable these fish can be.” The third trend is “Cauliflower is the new “it” vegetable.” Price sees cauliflower as “...the up-and-coming darling vegetable of the moment. And for good reason—it’s loaded with nutrients and can do all sorts of culinary tricks, from standing in for starchier, higher-calorie potatoes in dishes to turning a soup creamy and rich without any cream.

Trend four is kaniwa and is similar to quinoa but smaller. Quinoa has actually already gone mainstream. We buy it in large quantities, combine, and cook it in our hot cereals, use as a grain dish for our dinner meals, and even add it to cookies and other baked goods. It adds a lot of protein to any recipe.

Trend five is fermentation. Prices explains: “Fermentation harnesses the power of microbes to transform the flavors and textures of food—like milk into creamy yogurt, cabbage into sauerkraut and tea into bubbly kombucha. Signs of the fermentation craze are everywhere: fermentation guru Sandor Katz’s latest book, *The Art of Fermentation*, won a James Beard Award this year; mobile kombucha brewing stands are bubbling up at farmers’ markets; and rows of small-batch artisanal sauerkrauts are filling shelves at the local supermarket.” There is even a local bar in Healdsburg, California that serves up “. . . kefir waters, kombuchas and shrubs, along with traditional fermented beverages we’ve loved forever—a.k.a. wine and beer.”

Last but not least is trend six: Community-supported foods. Known as community supported agriculture (CSA), have become well known throughout the nation. CSA farms operate with the help of a community that supports the risks and rewards through a membership in CSA shares. Community-supported agriculture (CSA; sometimes known as community-shared agriculture) is an alternative, locally-based economic model of agriculture and food distribution. CSAs can include breads, cheese, herbs, honey, eggs, dairy products, meat, and fish, Although CSAs can offer any product, the most common items are produce, fruits, and various edibles. A few CSA programs also include cut flowers and ornamental plants.

You can learn more at the USDA website, *Community Supported Agriculture*, <http://www.nal.usda.gov/afsic/pubs/csa/csa.shtml>. Also, learn more about these six trends, including recipes, at Eatingwell.com, http://www.eatingwell.com/food_news_origins/food_news/6_top_healthy_food_trends_for_2014. The next article will focus on restaurants and 21st technology for healthy foods.

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Restaurants-Low Cal Good for Business

(published in Boerne Star, Friday, Aug 29, 2014)

Have you ever wondered if having low calorie meals on a restaurant menu has actually helped that restaurant stay afloat or even thrive? Hudson Institute says yes with a February 2013 report, ***Lower-Calorie Foods: It's Just Good Business*** (<http://www.rwjf.org/content/dam/farm/reports/reports/2013/rwjf404136>).

Hudson Institute examined the business impact and bottom line of restaurants serving more lower-calorie foods and beverages. This report, produced by the Obesity Solutions Initiative of Hudson Institute, was funded by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. The focus had one key question, "Can selling lower-calorie foods and beverages be better for restaurant chains' sales, customer traffic, and total servings figures?" This report claims to be the first that determined the financial impact of lower-calorie foods and beverages on the US restaurant industry and public health.

This study clearly demonstrated that between 2006 and 2011 lower-calorie foods and beverages were the key growth engine for the restaurants studied. Restaurant chains growing their servings of lower-calorie foods and beverages demonstrated superior same-store sales (SSS) growth, increases in restaurant customer traffic, gains in overall restaurant servings. "Among all chains studied, lower-calorie items were the key growth engine for both foods and beverages. Chains growing lower-calorie food servings saw increases in overall food servings,

while other chains recorded declines. Chains growing lower-calorie food servings also recorded strong traffic growth, while other chains declined.”

Criteria for lower-calorie menu Items included “Center of the Plate” item (e.g., sandwich; entrée; meal salad) ≤ 500 calories, Side dish item ≤ 150 calories, Beverage item ≤ 50 calories/8 oz. serving, Appetizer item ≤ 150 calories, Dessert item ≤ 150 calorie. Traditional foods and beverages, such as French fries, are on the decline.

What opportunities have arisen with the shift to lower-calorie foods for restaurants? First, emphasizing lower-calorie foods and beverages is a proven pathway to improved servings, traffic, and sales. Second, proof that performance is enhanced could accelerate the development and marketing of lower-calorie menu items. Third, public health officials and policymakers need to heed core restaurant chain business metrics in order to most effectively work with industry to address the obesity epidemic.

Fourth, the lower-calorie servings metric developed in this study should be adopted by restaurant chains to annually track performance and progress. Fifth, restaurant chains now have incentive to lower their calorie footprints to enhance their performance and to help address high obesity rates.

I would encourage you to read the Hudson report and check out how 21st century technology is playing a role in healthy foods served by restaurants (<http://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/2014/jan/06/food-trends-2014-digital-dining-healthy-junk-food>). Here are a few creative culinary developments that include edible QR codes first created by Harney Sushi, a restaurant in San Diego. Sushi attempted to address the problem that 52% of Californian seafood is supposedly mislabeled. Solution . . . edible rice paper QR codes. Another one is a hologram chef, believe it or not! Electrolux Design Lab plans to bring top chefs into users' kitchens for tutorials via the medium of hologram.

With the intent to dejunk junk food, have you tried kale lollies yet? Marketers are encouraging you to give these “green” lollipops a try next summer. Last but surely not the least of imaginative offerings coming our way are savory yogurts, such as carrot, tomato, parsnip and beetroot yogurts, already the “in” thing in New York.

Have any healthy food ideas yourself for our 21st century culinary crowd that you would like to see in your refrigerator or restaurant? By all means, be creative. Give it a try and see what happens. Who knows? You just might improve our public health a notch or two while you strike it rich riding this low-cal, hi-tech culinary wave!

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