



February 12

Culinary Nutrition News: Why Most Diets Fail and How You Can Help

Provided through a partnership between ACEF Chef & Child Foundation and Clemson University, and sponsored by French's Foodservice.

Millions of people go on a diet each year, whether to lose weight or for health reasons such as allergies or diabetes. Three in 10 Americans—25 percent of men and 32 percent of women—are trying to lose weight at any given time, according to a Gallup poll published Nov. 28, 2011. Consequently, we spend roughly \$60 billion annually on programs and products geared toward dieting and weight loss. That's a lot of money, advice and emotional investment, especially considering the outcome. A recent study of 31 long-term diet plans conducted by the American Psychological Association found that up to two-thirds of participants ended up heavier than when they started. Chefs, walk into your dining room and look around ... someone is bound to be dieting.

The word "diet"

The word "diet" comes from the Greek *diaita*, meaning "way of living"—an approach to health that linked the mental with the physical. Somehow the word has been given a stifling stigma that has little to do with living and more to do with denying, restraining or restricting. In all actuality, the term refers to the typical food and drink one consumes; however, nowadays it is often used to commandeer crazed and faulty attempts at losing weight.

While people often say they are going on a diet, you rarely hear people say, "I'm going to change my eating behaviors." Therein lies the problem. Diets are often time-sensitive attempts at dropping pounds as

quickly as possible and rarely entail an overhaul in eating behaviors that can be maintained indefinitely. The latter is the only real way to maintain weight or reach a manageable weight-loss goal. From a physiological and psychological standpoint, most diets don't seem to work in the long run. But why?

Five failure-bound diet strategies

1 Diets that eliminate entire food groups. Diets that eliminate food groups deprive you, leaving you not only hungry and fatigued, but also lacking certain key nutrients. One thing to remember is that even fat has its place. Psychologically, when one is deprived of something, it often causes obsessive thoughts about what is being withheld. For instance, if you're not supposed to eat a cookie, all you can think about is eating a cookie. This is why moderation is preached in almost any and every nutrition class. If you want a cookie, have one. Just don't eat 10.

2 Diets that promise instant results. Some diets are more sensible than others, but any regimen that promises swift and dramatic results will most likely lead followers down the path of failure. Diets that promise instant results are often unmanageable in the long run. In other words, instant results equal unsustainable practices. Remember, "slow and steady wins the race."

3 Diets that specify a certain amount of time. If a diet has an allotted amount of time, say 30 days, you may see quick results, but this often comes with a speedy reversal of the results afterward. As stated before, these types of diets are often impossible to maintain, and diets will not work unless you can maintain them.

4 Diets that only allow for a small amount of select foods. A diet that calls for the same foods to be eaten over and over again is bound to get old fast. This strategy is reminiscent of ones that eliminate foods, in that you will not only get bored but you will begin obsessing about the very foods you are supposed to avoid. Sure, some people may like that kind of structure and stability of eating the same thing, but eating the same foods means you will eventually be missing some vital nutrients. Even if you eat the same vegetables and fruit, you will lack certain nutrients since each variety of produce offers its own unique combination of vitamins, minerals and antioxidants.

5 Diets that leave no room for mistakes. Some diets contain little flexibility, allowing people to plunge into a diet with the detrimental all-or-nothing attitude. This is a huge problem, because when you make a mistake (which will happen), you think the whole day or even week is shot so you continue to indulge in the wrong foods. This is why it's imperative that diets allow for flexibility as well as variety.

WEIGHT WATCHERS' MENU TERMS TO AVOID

Weight Watchers has created a list of words for diners to watch out for because they are often "loaded with calories." This list can help tell you what items on your menu are most perceived as calorically dense. This knowledge can help you and your servers steer dieting diners in the right direction.

- Au fromage
- Au gratin
- Au lait
- Battered
- Bisque
- Cream of
- Dipped
- Double-baked
- Hollandaise
- Just like mom's
- Newburg
- Pan-fried
- Parmesan
- Sauteed
- Tempura

At the end of the day, what really causes most diets to fail is the simple fact that we are all different. We have different body types, metabolic rates, activity levels and general likes and dislikes when it comes to food. This fact alone is what causes us to raise an eyebrow when someone professes a diet regimen that will work for any and everybody. Starting with a diet plan is great, but in order to maintain healthy eating behaviors, one must mold it to fit their desires and needs. Start with a respected model and develop it around your unique tastes and needs.

Best diets in America

U.S. News and World Report put together a panel of experts to evaluate 25 of the most popular diets. Each diet was rated on a scale of one to five on these measures: short- and long-term weight loss; ease of following; nutrition; safety; and performance as a diabetes and heart diet. The organization factored in each diet's score on all measures to compute its overall score. The top five best diets overall were the DASH Diet, TLC Diet, Mayo Clinic Diet, Mediterranean Diet and Weight Watchers Diet.

What makes these diets the best is the exact opposite of what makes others fail. These diets rely heavily on the consumption of fruits, vegetables and whole grains,

while curbing the intake of saturated fat and salt. They are all reasonably inclusive when it comes to different food groups and highlight moderation of certain indulgences. Because they don't eliminate or restrict whole food groups and allow for flexibility in addition to the occasional treat, they are sustainable.

DASH Diet

The DASH (Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension) Diet, developed by the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute, is based on an eating plan that increases fruit, vegetable and fiber consumption, while decreasing fat and sodium intake. It is particularly rich in potassium and calcium, which are thought to be important in lowering blood pressure.

Visit: <http://dashdiet.org>

TLC Diet

Created by the National Institutes of Health's National Cholesterol Education Program, the Therapeutic Lifestyle Changes (TLC) Diet is endorsed by the American Heart Association as a heart-healthy regimen that can reduce the risk of cardiovascular disease. The key is cutting back on fat (particularly saturated fat), limiting daily dietary cholesterol intake and getting more fiber to help people manage high cholesterol, often without medication.

Visit: www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/public/heart/cholesterol/tlc.pdf

Mayo Clinic Diet

The Mayo Clinic Diet: Eat Well, Enjoy Life, Lose Weight (Good Books, 2010) consists of two parts: "Lose it!" and "Live it!" Part 1 focuses on 15 key habits—ones to add and ones to ditch. During part 1, you don't count calories, and you can have all the fruits and vegetables you want. After two weeks, you begin part 2, which teaches you how many calories you should eat to either lose or maintain weight and where those calories should be derived from.

Visit: www.mayoclinic.com/health/mayo-clinic-diet/my01646



Diners on a diet seeking healthy alternatives often opt for fish served with fresh vegetables and salads with dressing on the side.

Mediterranean Diet

Studies have shown that people in the countries bordering the Mediterranean Sea tend to live longer and have lower rates of heart disease and some cancers when compared with other groups that follow conventional eating plans. This eating pattern was eventually deemed the "Mediterranean Diet," with general diet principles that include high consumption of fruits, vegetables, whole grains, fish, beans, olives, olive oil, nuts and seeds, moderate intake of wine, lean meats and fish, as well as a low intake of red meat and processed foods. For a more detailed look at how the Mediterranean Diet compares to other popular diets, read the August 2011 Culinary Nutrition News article, "Eating Like Our Ancestors."

Visit: www.mediterraneandiettoday.com

Weight Watchers

Weight Watchers' PointsPlus program assigns every food a point value based on its protein, carbohydrate, fat, fiber, calories and how hard your body has to work to burn it off. Choices that fill you up the longest "cost" the least, and nutritionally dense foods cost less than empty calories. So if you're wavering between a 200-calorie fruit smoothie and a 200-calorie iced coffee, the smoothie would be the smarter choice.

Visit: www.weightwatchers.com



The best diets are ones that rely heavily on the consumption of fruits, vegetables and whole grains.

What's in it for you?

Why should this concern you? That is, if you are not on a diet yourself? While some may want to blame their dieting pitfalls on restaurants, this is not completely fair. Restaurants offer a plethora of options and, while healthier options are beginning to make their way onto menus everywhere, there have always been ways to eat better when dining out. The truth is, if dining out had remained an extravagance reserved for special occasions as it once was, Americans may not be faced with the startling predicament that has befallen us by way of poor health conditions (diabetes, hypertension, reflux, obesity, etc.) associated with years of poor eating practices. The average American eats in restaurants 4.2 times a week. While this rate is great for business, it may not be so great for the growing waistlines of Americans. The main problem is that we don't know when to stop eating.

Most people, dieting or not, allow themselves a little leeway when dining out. What they don't know can't hurt them, right? But what if they do know? What if they know exactly how much fat, how many calories and how much sodium is in what

they are eating? Could this change their eating habits away from home? It's really hard to say until it happens, if or when restaurant labeling laws come into effect.

While that may be a concern for the future, today a customer may enter your establishment and casually mention to their server, "I'm on a diet." While this diet could range from counting carbohydrates for diabetes to managing sodium for high blood pressure to the watch-what-you-eat diet, the server could make a world of difference by simply knowing how to point out the healthiest items. For example, the server could suggest, "We have fish in a light sauce, and you can choose steamed vegetables as a side." Inevitably, it will always be up to the customer to decide if they want to indulge or if they want to maintain certain eating patterns outside of their homes. However, as you gather your staff and rattle off the specials, perhaps you could add, "If there is someone looking for a healthy option, tonight we have..."

Helping dieting diners

Using the DASH Diet's tips for dining out, we've created a list detailing what a potential customer may be looking for when they peruse your menu. The DASH Diet is a good representation of what most dieters, regardless of the plan, may look for when dining out.

1

Cut back on salt

The fundamental feature of the DASH Diet is cutting back on salt. With this in mind, you may be asked to prepare food without added salt, MSG or salt-containing ingredients. This means being on the lookout for ingredients as well as cooking styles that indicate a dish may be high in salt. This includes high-sodium condiments such as soy sauce, mustard, ketchup, pickles and sauces, as well as foods described as pickled, cured or smoked. Since so many appetizers are salty, offering fruit-and-vegetable choices can be helpful for diners.

2

Reduce unhealthy fats

The DASH Diet also promotes foods that are low in saturated fat and cholesterol. This means, you may be asked to prepare food with olive oil rather than butter. Also, customers may request oil and vinegar rather than salad dressing or salad dressing on the side. Another popular choice is steamed or broiled fish seasoned with a small amount of acid and fresh herbs. Trimming visible fat off meat and poultry and offering portions that are about the size of a deck of cards could also be helpful for those watching what they eat. Dieters are more inclined to choose foods prepared with healthier cooking techniques such as broiling, baking, roasting, poaching or stir-frying. Again, making sure you have fruit-and-vegetable options available as side dishes is key.

3

Take care with all courses

It's not just the entree that can sabotage efforts to stick to the DASH Diet. Drinks, appetizers and even soups and salads may be healthier than you think. Dieters are more inclined to choose appetizers that feature vegetables, fruits or fish. When they order salad, they will probably be looking for a fruit salad or tossed greens or spinach salad without cheese, eggs or meats, and with dressing on the side. As for the inevitable bread basket, add whole-grain bread, rolls or breadsticks



Moderation is key to a balanced diet. Eating sweets is OK, just don't overindulge.

to the mix. Reasonable dessert offerings for dieting diners include fresh fruit, sorbet, sherbet, fruit ice, meringues or a simple cake with fruit purée.

4

Avoid oversized portions

The DASH Diet recommends specific serving sizes. In light of possible oversized portions, diners may ask for the lunch portion for dinner, to substitute an appetizer for an entrée, split a meal with a companion or ask for a takeout container before they start eating. ■

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About the American Culinary Federation and the Chef & Child Foundation



The American Culinary Federation, Inc., established in 1929, is the premier professional organization for culinarians in North America. With over 20,000 members in more than 210 chapters nationwide, ACF is the culinary leader in offering educational resources, training, apprenticeship and accreditation. In addition, ACF operates the most comprehensive certification program for chefs in the United States. ACF is home to ACF Culinary Team USA, the official representative for the United States in major international culinary competitions, and to the Chef & Child Foundation, founded in 1989 to promote proper nutrition in children and to combat childhood obesity. For more information, visit www.acfcchefs.org.

About Clemson University



“Culinary nutrition” is the application of nutrition principles combined with food science knowledge displayed through a mastery of culinary skills. CU CHEFS® (Clemson University’s Cooking and Healthy Eating Food Specialists

Outreach Services), led by Dr. Margaret Condrasky, promotes healthy foods research and applications for culinary professionals and the food industry. Ranked No. 25 among the nation’s top public institutions, Clemson University is a science-and engineering-oriented research university that maintains a strong commitment to teaching and student success.

About French's Foodservice



French’s Foodservice is proud to sponsor this series of nutritional articles authored by Clemson University for the ACFEF Chef & Child Foundation. At French’s Foodservice, we believe that “you are what you serve,” and have built our reputation by providing the highest-quality ingredients to meet the ever-changing needs of the foodservice industry. As chefs, restaurateurs, educators and nutritionists, you positively impact the health of our nation by advocating the positive impact of healthy eating, especially among children. We are proud to support this worthy cause.

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