Tips to Help with Your Eating, Cooking, Meal Prepping Goals

By Chef Jen, RDN/LDN

For many people, the new year and its resolutions trigger the need for BIG changes in people’s lives. However, BIG can usually lead to an overwhelming feeling and discouragement. For myself, I prefer to do multiple smaller goals. Starting with one, and if it’s done, then I work on the next one, and so on. Think about it as a ski slope. If you are a beginner skier, you aren’t going to be headed down the black diamond trails, you work your way up to it. Bunny hill first, then green trails and then, the black diamonds. Think of your goals for the new year in that manner.

Many people resolve to “eat better” for the new year. Of course, I’m all for this! Healthy eating isn’t hard, but you do need to plan. Here’s what I suggest:

1. Set aside time on a specific day to plan meals for the week. This doesn’t mean every single meal, pick just one. Either lunch or dinner.
2. Look through your cabinets, pantry, fridge and freezer. Notice what ingredients you have on hand.
3. Look through magazines, Pinterest, Chef Jen’s Nutrition Corner (😉😉) and other websites to select what meals you would like to cook.
4. It’s ideal to try to select foods that share the same ingredients… it’ll help with budget, but it’s not necessary.
5. Write down the recipes you want to make and when.
6. Make your shopping list.
7. STICK TO THE LIST!!!!
8. To help you with this, try setting reminders or alarms in your phone for those times to prep, look for recipes, shop, etc. This will help you to stay on track.

I often hear people say that they “don’t have the time” to cook healthy. Here are some tips on how to save time BUT here is the key: YOU will have to MAKE the time.

- Examine your days and see where you can make the time to select recipes, make your list, grocery shop and prep. They don’t have to all be at the same time. When you get home from shopping (or when you pick it up or get it delivered) Start right away with washing fruits and veggies. That will save some time later on. If you have the time, go a head and prep veggies or fruits for that day’s dinner and the next nights. Be careful which you choose to prep and wash. I’ve had problems with washing big bunches grapes and blueberries. If it was too far out from when I was going to eat them, they tomorrow, go ahead- prep and portion out what you need for the next recipe.
- Be gentle with yourself! There are PLENTY of days where I myself, have all the intentions of making dinner. Maybe I've had a long day, or maybe it's been an emotional day, or the kid is raising Caine and when dinner time rolls around: I just don't feel like it.

If you can't get to it, it's ok. But make sure, if you already have those items prepped, that you get on it the next day. You don't want them to spoil! Then, pick yourself back up and get back to business!

For inspiration and examples of how to incorporate the same ingredient, check out the recipes tab, here on Nutrition Corner or check out this link from Cooking Light and Southern Living.

Eat Well, Be Well, Spread Peace and Be Kind to Yourself,

~~ Chef Jen RDN/LDN, RYT-200