



Introduction to Simple, Healthy, Fresh

with bonus

How to Cook Simple Healthy Fresh

BACKGROUND

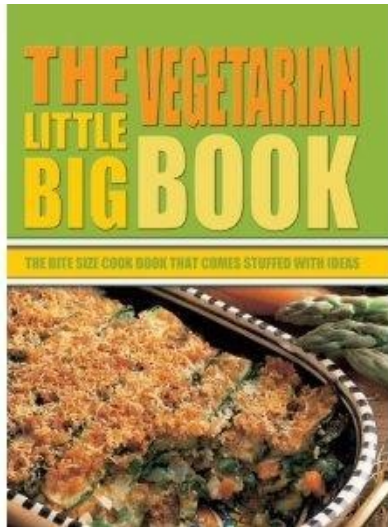
I never wanted to write a cookbook. I didn't even enjoy cooking until after I received the Gift of Life, a Kidney Transplant in 2003, well into my 30s. Up until that point, food was tasteless, bland, I didn't know, or maybe, just wasn't interested, in cooking. Oh don't get me wrong, I knew how. My Mom taught me the basics of cooking, plus I was Head Cook in a high-end restaurant during my High School years (and vowed never to return to a commercial or restaurant kitchen after that!). This cookbook is the result of many people requesting me to create one. This is for you!

I've been studying and learning about foods, spices, how to prepare, cook, about food relationships since 2003 (on my own) and now am sharing what I've learned.



After the Transplant, I discovered 'Hey, food actually does taste good!', and I ate. And ate. And ate. There were five or six fast food joints within a couple hundred feet of my front door. OH BOY!

So, a year later, I went from 135 pounds on dialysis to 205 (or so) on the Immunosuppressants. I had gained 70 pounds and diabetes type 2, with eating and the side effect of several medications I was put on. I realized I had to do something. I had never been overweight before and I didn't like it. It was painful to move, I could not walk very far, and I had trouble breathing.



I realized I had to eat better, which meant more vegetables. And no one likes steaming lumps of goo plopped on a plate. So I went to the bookstore and found a Vegetarian cookbook. I devoured the words! Yes, even the forward and introduction. It was my new food bible, [The Little Big Vegetarian Book](#), by Carla Bardi and McRae Publishing. Suddenly I was reading about foods I'd never thought of before: Eggplant, different Squashes (globe, yellow, crookneck, on and on), Leeks, Turnips, and Parsnips to name a few. As an aside, I even bought several copies to give away on a Health Blog I had at the time and I gave it away as presents to family and close friends.

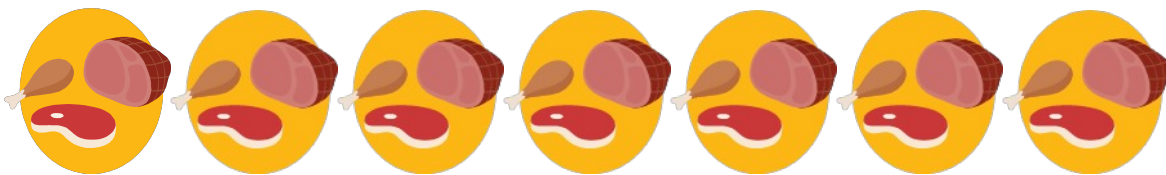
When eating healthy, add an active lifestyle. It is nearly impossible to lose weight, tone a body and be energetic by changing food alone. There needs to be some sort of body movement that makes you sweat for an extended period of time. When I started eating healthy, I started with the best way to get exercise, lose weight and get more energy, touted by Doctors, Nurses, Dieticians, Nutritionists, Endocrinologists, Exercise Physiologists and Trainers: Simple Walking.

As I say in my article, [How I lost 41 Pounds](#), "That was a four-letter word to me. Walking was always enjoyable, so I started walking around my neighborhood where I lived. That first walk was less than one hundred feet. I was gasping for breath, clutching my chest and my legs felt like jello. After a time, I was making the 1.25 mile walk in 20 to 30 minutes. Now, I can walk for hours without feeling pain or shortness of breath." All you need is a decent pair of Tennis or Walking shoes. The Neighborhood? The Mall? Local high school track or gym?



BUYING FOOD

Eventually, I bought many cookbooks on low-fat, low-sodium, low-carb, vegetarian and various 'touted' health and celebrity cookbooks. I read everything: Introductions, preparation techniques, storage suggestions, how to buy food. These are things you have seen a hundred times before. Buy meats on sale then buy double (or triple) to stock up and freeze them, depending on freezer space. Buy a variety of meats: low-fat beef, chicken, pork, fish--all cuts and styles.



When I started shopping healthy, I stayed away from anything pre-made, pre-prepared, boxed, bagged or canned. I was told to cut out sodium, sugar and wheat products, and derivatives made from any of them, you can too. Train yourself to shop mainly on the circumference of the store: Fresh fruits, vegetables, meats, dairy and stay away from the aisles as much as possible. That is where all the unhealthy pre-prepared, boxed and bagged food is. Can you even call it food? You want as close to Nature as possible.



Now is the time to be picky about your vegetables! The best way to buy vegetables is simple: by thump, squeeze and smell. They should look fresh, just off the farm with no bruising or spots. They should have an aroma and not smell like wax, pesticide or dirt. They should be firm and barely squeezable. Pick them up, look through the offerings and get the best value for your money. I take my time when buying vegetables. I look for sales, specials of the week, loss leaders and so on.

Use coupons for household items, such as cleaning supplies, personal care items, boxed stock and broth coupons are a lifesaver! The savings you get from using coupons can be applied to fresh fruits, vegetables and meats that you find in the bargain bin, clearance section and on sale! Use store coupons and flyers. I typically save between 20 and 50% by just using their store cards and coupons. Many have smartphone apps that give you savings you can load right on their cards!

COOKING AND SPICES

When I was twenty, my Dr. at the time told me to stop using salt in my cooking and at the table, as I was borderline high blood pressure. She told me that fresh fruits, vegetables, meats and dairy have enough naturally occurring salt/sodium themselves to more than meet my daily nutritional requirements. So, I wondered, how else to flavor foods, if salt was now forbidden? I remembered my Mother using some basic herbs and spices (salt notwithstanding).

My first spices and herbs were what I now call my go-to spices, my BOT: Basil, Oregano and Thyme. These are versatile, used in most any cuisine, and much depth and flavor. They can be used on anything and believe me, I put it on everything: eggs, pasta, poultry, spaghetti and so on. My next spice I bought and experimented with was Rosemary. I was in love.



Fast forward a few (ok, many) years later to today and if you look in my spice cupboard, you will see over 40+ spices, from Allspice to White Pepper! I'm always on the lookout for bargains, clearances and sales on spices! I look for half-off, buy-one-get-one, buy-two-get-one sales and always, coupons. With various sales and coupons, I can get top shelf spices for just a few dollars a bottle.

Speaking of, shelf life of many spices is between three and six months. So look at how you plan on using the spices, your level of cooking, adventurousness and the size of the bottle. Starting out, I would suggest the half-bottle of spices, which are offered by many quality spice makers. Since I have been cooking for a while and very adventurous, I buy the large bottles and in some spices and herbs, the larger containers, since I know they will be used extensively. I will always use dried herbs and spices. They last longer and are double strength of fresh spices and herbs.



For example, two teaspoons of fresh thyme will equal one teaspoon dried thyme. The spices in the recipes will usually be between 1/2 to 1 teaspoon (tsp). I don't give exact measurements of the spices, because the amount I like will be different to what you like. Start with 1/2 teaspoon and you will find out if you like a certain spice or not. Some recipes I do give an exact measurement because I feel that is how the recipe will taste the best.

There are some spices that you will learn to gather together for certain cuisines. For example, I will use Curry, Coriander, Summer Savory, and Turmeric for Mediterranean and Indian cuisine; Anise, Cardamom, Chinese Five Spice, Ground and Candied Ginger, Lemon Peel for more Asian influenced dishes and so on. And of course, my BOT spices (you will see this in my recipes) as a base for most dishes.

Don't be afraid to follow a new recipe, experiment and venture outside your comfort zone. Recipes are like blueprints: follow the first time, then experiment. Make it yours. There isn't much anyone can do to completely make a food or recipe unfit for human consumption. It may taste odd, but chances are, it won't kill you. Plus, you have learned something. I can't tell you how many experiments I've tried that really did not work out, but I still ate it. Food is, after all, too expensive to waste. Don't be afraid to mix and match and see what you get!

LOW-CARB, LOW-SALT

Before I started looking for substitutions for Low-Carb and Low-Salt foods with having Diabetes Type-2, I thought the only foods I could eat were water and celery, maybe cabbage soup with nothing in it. There were Dieticians, Nutritionists, Endocrinologists that really helped open my eyes, plus I did a lot of my own research. I found some easy ways to cut carbs in my diet.

I am a big pasta lover! Some of my fondest memories with my Mom in the kitchen involve elbow macaroni and spaghetti with lots of chunky sauce and lots and lots of tomato sauce! I was resigned to having to give it up. A few years ago, I found low-carb spaghetti and gluten-free spaghetti right in the regular grocery store pasta aisle, they are a bit pricey, even with coupons and sales. I discovered that even whole wheat pasta is healthier than white, being a few carbs lower than white. So, if you're like me, you don't have to give up pasta-just take smaller portions and pay attention to the serving suggestions and what the carb counts are. More on that later.. There are low-carb and gluten-free breads in the bread aisle as well.



Speaking of carbs, if you've been told to avoid high carb foods, the big three vegetables I (and most diabetics) had to give up were corn, peas and potatoes--the staple of every American diet. At almost every lunch and dinner, I could count on at least one of the three, if not two out of three. They are at the heart or crux, of most diabetic's diets these days. If you just have to eat them, use 1/4 or 1/3 cup servings and stick with it. No seconds or 'extra servings'. Now, I save potatoes for special occasions, such as Thanksgiving and Christmas. It means something more special now, something to look forward to.

For regular weekday meals, if I'm craving something mashed, I will steam or simmer a head of cauliflower in stock or broth, mash and add some type of cheese. I get the visual cues and mouthfeel of something mashed. Healthy comfort food! There are

many ways to trick your mind into having healthy food and be satisfied, as discussed in my article, [Healthy Eating at the Holidays](#).

Other foods I had to modify were rice, breads just to name a few. For rice, and I mention this throughout the cookbooks, I use a mix of 3/4 brown rice to 1/4 wild rice. This is a bit healthier and adds some fiber as well, plus wild rice lowers the carb count of one serving of rice, down to about 20-25 carbs from 35-45 carbs. You still can't eat 2-3 cups of it, but for the same serving size, it's a healthier choice! Plus, add a bag of frozen lower-carb vegetables to any rice recipe in this cookbook (snow peas, water chestnut, bell pepper, broccoli, cauliflower, mushrooms!) and you're set to go. These add bulk and fiber to the rice, make it more filling and lower both the carb and calorie content. Remember to add your spices and if wanted, a low-sodium soy sauce.

As far as the bad fats (Omega-6's) to avoid, that is as simple as reducing your red meat intake, foods made from lard and corn oil. You can still have red meat, but sparingly. I try to eat only 1 red meat meal a week. If I'm using ground beef, it's as simple as draining off the rendered fat. If I'm going to have a cut of beef, I trim off all visible fat and the silver.



The good fats you want are Omega-3's. These are found in most fish, Salmon having the highest content, though I do not eat a lot of fish due to mercury, lead and other poisons in our oceans, lakes and streams. With Extra Virgin Olive Oil--always look for "First Cold Press". This has the highest Omega-3 fat content. If you want to fry, use a vegetable oil. In the cookbook you will see this expressed as EVOO-FCP.

Look for coupons and sales at grocery stores and pharmacies that have a food section for Extra Virgin Olive Oil. They will cycle their sales every few weeks or months. When you do find a sale, stock up!

THE BOOK: SIMPLE, HEALTHY, FRESH

I've tried to include a sampler variety of 60-70 dishes, simple to prepare, with fresh, healthy and readily available fruits and vegetables and foods in your regular grocery store. There are tips and hints sprinkled throughout the pages for you, with preparation suggestions, substitutions, how-to's. These are tidbits I've picked up along the way, have studied on my own, learned how to cook healthy, low-carb, low-sodium, low-fat and low-calorie by myself. I'm happy to share what I've learned over the years.

In book 2 of this series are more simple recipes for you to try, create and make your own that are healthy for your body and mind, as well as being as close to nature as possible. All the meats and vegetables are bought at local farmers markets, and other food items are bought from local grocery stores, well within reach of limited income families such as mine. We eat very little meat and when we do the meat is lean, fat-free beef (only about once per week), chicken (either whole, cut up or breast/thigh meat, low fat pork and sausage from healthy meats. We do like the drumsticks as weekend treats, grilled or baked with a spicy or sweet barbeque dipping sauce. Sometimes we enjoy healthy fish, like Salmon, Sole, Cod or Tuna. Most any of the chicken or pork dishes can be substituted with fish. Remember, a serving is 4 ounces, so you need to buy only 4 ounces per person.



We eat a lot of salad, a favorite being romaine. Romaine is a hearty, 'meaty' salad that lasts a long time and can withstand most anything you throw on it. It's a great all-around leafy green for many dishes. Green, red, butter and bib lettuce is great as well, though they must be eaten within a day or two of buying, because they do not store well. These are more delicate salads so I would not throw a whole lot of heavy vegetables or meats in with them.

In the second cookbook, I introduce more ways to incorporate vegetables in your meals, such as beet greens as an accompaniment to fried chicken and a roasted mashed potato-beet dish. Roasting makes the beets sweet and sultry, perfect for Valentine's day, special anniversary or Christmas dinner. Be adventurous with your cooking and don't be afraid to try new things. There are many recipes for you to try out, change what you want and make it your own.



The Flavored Oils from Simple Healthy Fresh-vegetable oil on the left and EVOO-FCP on the right.

Remember, as in the first cookbook, when I use Olive Oil, I'm using Extra Virgin Olive Oil-First Cold Press. This is the most authentic Olive Oil from Italy and other Olive producing regions in the world. Many 'light' versions in the supermarkets today are soy-based with olive oil flavorings. I buy the large gallon tin of olive oil from Italy, around \$20 in my neck of the woods. I use Olive Oil for sautéing or light heating of meats and vegetables. For pan or deep frying, I use a canola or vegetable oil. These are lower in fat and calories than a corn or other oil and the cheapest on the market.



My 40 + spices in these racks plus more in the above cupboard.

When using herbs or spices, I use dried spices. When using dried spices, use half of what you would if you were using fresh spices and herbs. Dried spices are twice as pungent, for instance, if you were to use 2 tablespoons fresh rosemary, you would use 1 tablespoon of dried. If you have a mortar and pestle, I would grind all my spices using that, however, if you have a small processor, feel free to run them through that for a few seconds, to 'wake' them up. You could always rub the dried spices between your palms to activate the oils and aromas, but sometimes I just add them in at the beginning of a dish, because dried is more forgiving than fresh.

Typically, I stay away from canned foods but exceptions are tomatoes and low-sodium stocks. With fresh tomatoes so expensive these days, canned tomatoes can be inexpensive and such a time saver. If you have store loyalty cards, you will sometimes get an extra cheaper price for items you frequently buy. One of those items I get an extra discount on is canned tomatoes! If I see a lower price on tomatoes, I will stock up on them. My favorite type of canned tomato is diced, either regular or small diced.

What is health?

Health is what you put into your body and what you do with it., fresh fruits and vegetables that are firm with fresh aromas are best for you. They do so much for healthy skin, muscle tissue, bone and so on. For my cookbooks, I concentrate on low-carb, low-salt and low-calorie vegetables. Like many people, I have heart disease and diabetes (due to a kidney transplant in 2003), so I have to watch what I put in my body, I know to stay away from corn, peas, potatoes, summer squash to name a few of the high-carb vegetables. Also, I know what it's like living on a fixed income, not having hundreds and hundreds of dollars each month for groceries, so I keep that in mind as well. It is tough eating healthy on a fixed income, but it can be done. Me and my family are living proof. It also comes down to priorities and what you pay for. We do not have cable tv, dozens of subscriptions but we live frugally and within our means. We do have so we are not cut off from the world.



Let's talk about diabetes and carbohydrates. Specifically, Type-2 diabetes, which is what I have. The description, per www.Webmd.com:

"Type 2 diabetes, once called non-insulin dependent diabetes or adult-onset diabetes, is the most common form of diabetes, affecting 90% to 95% of the 13 million men with diabetes.

Unlike people with type 1 diabetes, people with type 2 diabetes produce insulin; however, the insulin their pancreas secretes is either not enough or the body is unable to recognize the insulin and use it properly. This is called insulin resistance. When there isn't enough insulin or the insulin is not used as it should be, sugar (glucose) can't get into the body's cells to be used for fuel. When sugar builds up in the blood instead of going into cells, the body's cells are not able to function properly."

As a diabetic, non-insulin dependent, I am allowed 40 carbs per meal and 20 carbs per snack. That isn't a whole lot. Go to your cupboard, pull out some food, snack items and read the carb count and serving suggestions. The biggest culprits of carbs (besides overly processed, pre-made foods) is grains, legumes and rices, which I tend to want to

stay away from, knowing they are bad for my health, but I can have them, if I'm smart. For example, if I'm having a sandwich, I'll read the label. If the slices are large and 20-25 carbs each, I'll cut one slice in half and that is usually enough to fill me. Likewise, if the slices are smaller and reading the label, they are 10-12 carbs each, I can have two slices. I try to use low-carb fillings, especially in breakfast sandwiches.



Legumes are higher carb but they also have a higher fiber count. We can subtract fiber count from carbs and come up with the glycemic index, which is what diabetics are suggested to follow. Try to limit your intake of beans to one cup per serving, and include lower carb vegetables when you prepare your beans. I include lots of onion, garlic and celery, trying to limit the amount of carrots, which are higher carbs. Fill up on a large, crispy salad before eating a meal you know has carbs, that way you will be less inclined to overeat.

Rices are almost pure carbs and sugar, which is deadly for diabetics. When I prepare rice dishes, I use 1/4 cup dry rice and 1/2 cup liquid per person. That will equal 1/2 cup prepared rice. Also, I use a brown or a mix of brown and wild rice. Granted, wild rice is pricey, but use a 3-1 ratio when mixing rice, if you can. For example, mix 3/4 cup brown rice and 1/4 cup wild in a jar with a lid then when preparing, use 1/4 of this dry rice and 1/2 cup liquid.

What liquid do I suggest? Depending on the dish, this is your chance to flavor the rice. Since I don't use salt in my cooking or at my table, I will use low-sodium stocks or broths, wines and plain water. I will put spices in with the rice, depending on what cuisine I'm making. Also, don't be afraid to add dried fruits, nuts, and vegetables to your rice. They will flavor the rice and add texture, bulking up the rice dish as well as adding fiber, remembering to subtract the fiber count from the carb count.

The other half of healthy living is doing some form of exercise, that makes you sweat, for an extended period of time. You should first talk to your healthcare provider to discuss any ongoing health issues you have, forms of treatment and what exercise is healthy for you. Exercise won't help if you've hurt something.

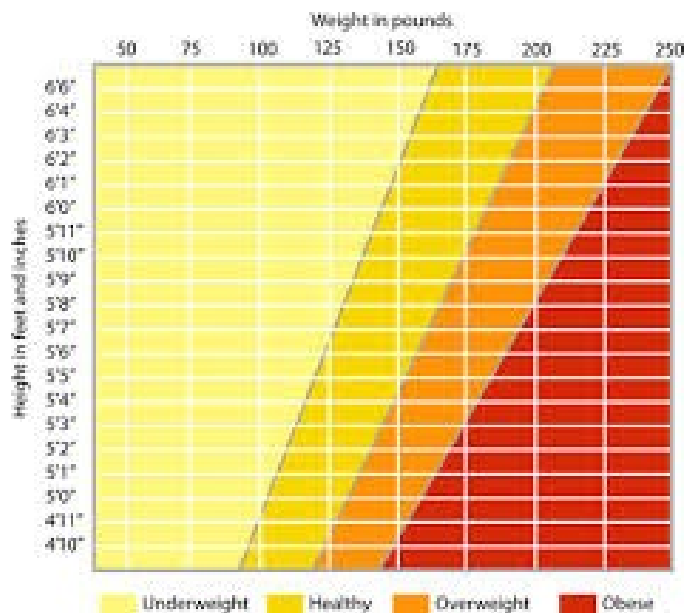
The best form of exercise is simple walking. It is true that a simple, brisk paced walk will do so much for your health: not only your heart, but your entire body, inside and out. The daily recommendation is 20-30 minutes each day. Start out by walking 10 minutes down the sidewalk (or country lane or back of the house), turn around and walk back. That wasn't so bad! Add 5 minutes a week. All you need is a comfortable pair of walking shoes.



You should also try to do some form of strength exercises. Personally, I use resistance bands for strength training. There is less chance of injury compared to barbells or free weights. This helps build strong bones, you don't want to be on a 'weak bones diet! You'll develop osteoarthritis, osteoporosis and other bone diseases and disabilities. Be sure you're getting your calcium (either through dairies, cheeses, milk, yogurt or a supplement). Afraid of the gym? Start lifting containers of food. They are usually one pound or two each, so that is a great way to start out.

Being healthy is taking care of oneself, to the best of their ability, eating healthy, fresh foods and seeing a healthcare provider, keeping an eye out for disease, disability, infection, obesity and so on. Another reason to seek help of a health care provider is to be referred to dietitian or nutritionist, to show what foods you can and cannot eat.

After my kidney transplant in 2003, I sat down with a dietitian/nutritionist a few times. They each explained what I could and could not have, what portions. Before the transplant, I was told what foods I should avoid (anything high potassium—it interfered with dialysis; anything high sodium, high fat, high calorie, high cholesterol, high carbohydrates). Believe me, that didn't leave much. I found a list of low-potassium foods (which listed about 30-40 foods) and shopped directly from that list alone. I had to be creative and I remember eating a lot of bean sprouts and jicama.



How is health measured? BMI (Body Mass Index) is one tool doctors, nurses, dietitians, nutritionists and health professionals use to determine if you are at risk for diabetes, heart disease, high blood pressure and other health issues associated with weight. When I was diagnosed with those issues, it was discovered that the medications I was on caused weight gain, so I had to really work at losing the weight to get down to a more healthy BMI. What did I do? I started by making small changes first in the kitchen.

By that time, I was told to cut out fat, potassium, cholesterol, calories altogether and by now I had been eating low-salt, low-calorie and low-cholesterol for over ten years, so that was one positive step. Second, I began making healthier choices at

fast food establishments. In this article, I wrote about Eating Healthy with Fast Food on EdgeBoston.com:.

If you're at a burger joint, it's still possible to eat healthy. Want options? Order a burger with a side salad and a coffee. You're getting your meat-fix and having a healthy side. Get your calcium and order some cheese on that burger. Go all the way and ask for double lettuce and double tomato (of course foregoing mayo). Have a different craving? Some fast food restaurants have baked potatoes. Ask for a plain baked potato with nothing on it and a small chili with no cheese. Smother the potato with the chili for a fiber-filled, low-salt lunch. Add a side salad with light or fat-free dressing.

When I eat fast food now, I would order a double cheeseburger, ketchup and mustard, pickles, double lettuce, double pickle & double tomato and a large side salad.



I was 19 when my Dr. informed me I needed to cut salt out of my diet or I would have a heart attack. So salt was banned immediately. At first the ban almost crippled my meals and enjoyment of eating, but in the 25 years since, I haven't missed a single crystal. That same Dr. told me that fresh fruits and vegetables have enough naturally occurring sodium to more than meet my daily nutritional requirements. She gave me a 40 mg limit of sodium per meal: let that sink in. An average fast food meal has 1751 milligrams of sodium! I'm allowed 40 mg per meal.

So to avoid increasing diabetes, heart disease, kidney failure, high blood pressure, I don't cook with salt or have it on my table, as I describe in my previous cookbook, "Simple, Healthy, Fresh 1.0" Instead, I allow the natural taste of foods to shine through. Salt hides flavor, texture and fools your taste buds. In my cooking, I use a lot of herbs, spices and other natural flavorings. These, used properly, enhance the flavors of fresh fruits, vegetables, low-salt meats.

When your mouth craves salt, what it's really craving is something bright and sharp. Instead of salt or those 'salt substitutes' that are all over the market (and, in my humble opinion, do nothing to stave the craving for salt) use dried citrus zest. My favorites are dried lemon and orange peel. You can make your own dried citrus zest: try lime, grapefruit, etc. A little goes a long way! When I would use salt in my teenage years, my food would look like snowy-salt mountains. How foolish I was!

In response to living low-sodium or no-salt for over two decades, I've created a line of flavored peppers, from Allspice Pepper to Rose Petal Pepper to Mustard Seed Pepper, that I use when cooking and for the table for flavoring instead of salt. Everyone has heard of lemon pepper and loves it. I'm no exception however, I discovered many of the commercial Lemon Peppers on the market include salt! So I created my own with dried lemon peel and either black pepper or pepper melange. Over the past years, I've scoured the local goodwill, sales, bargains and clearances at stores for pepper grinders. I now have twenty flavored peppers in my line, eight of which are in the picture below.

My kidney transplant doesn't miss the salt, neither does the diabetes and heart disease.



Brick's line of Peppers

I started eating healthy by removing anything processed, pre-made, boxed, bagged and canned. Those foods are so processed, that the end product no longer resembles the fresh from the farm food that it started out as. Also, I cut out salt and sugar, two leading causes of diabetes, heart disease. I also cut out white flour and anything made from or with white flour. Anymore, flour really bloats me so much, my stomach is so bloated as to be comfortable. You will be surprised what is lurking in your kitchen cupboards.

Salt is easy to find on a nutrition label, usually labelled as 'salt' or 'sodium'. Sugar, is more difficult to find. Look for the big one, corn syrup! That is so dangerous for us diabetics and organ transplant recipients. Look for and remove any foods that have a word in the nutrition label ending in 'ose. Such as dextrose, sucrose, fructose and so on. These are sugars that raise your blood sugar, numbers, blood pressure that give you headaches and make you sleepy.

As for the foods, I buy low-carb foods and basics, like carrots, celery, onions, winter squash, kale (black, leafy, green), spinach, chard, beet greens, bok choy, fennel, cucumber, beets, romaine, to give you a start. In 'Simple, Healthy, Fresh 2.0' there are recipe suggestions for the leafy greens, such as Winter Beef Stew with Kale, use the feathery fronds from fennel to make a fennel frond pesto! This is sharp and savory with a pasta or a base for a tasty crostini or bruschetta.

Buy/grow and Prepare your meals from foods as close to nature as possible. Buy your vegetables and fruits from local farmers so you know they are not full of GMO byproducts: only fresh, healthy from nature, foods. I do buy pastas from the store, because it isn't worth my time to make spaghetti, penne, rotini and so on from scratch. Start by switching out something you buy pre-made by making it yourself.

Your body will thank you!

Brick O'Neil, <http://brickoneil.com>

Books by Brick:

[Aside of Murder](#)

[Bamboo Killer](#)

[Different Dreams](#)

[Silver Linings on Dark Clouds \(My Life with Alport's Syndrome\)](#)

[Simple Healthy Fresh 1.0](#)

[Simple Healthy Fresh 2.0](#)

[Simple Healthy Fresh 3.0: Dinners](#)

[Triad: Fates, Furies and Graces](#)

[Ultimate Simple Healthy Fresh Cookbook](#)

[Unrelated: A Selection of Short Stories](#)

Contact Information:

Email: brickoneil@chef.net

Text: 206-276-5746

Google Voice: 518-406-6345 (51840-ONEIL)

How to Cook Simple Healthy Fresh



Ever wonder how I create the recipes for my Simple Healthy Fresh Cookbooks? Want to start cooking healthier? There are some simple rules that recipes must follow to be included in the Simple Healthy Fresh cookbooks. Here they are:

1. They must be Simple recipes that can include multiple steps that anyone with a rudimentary understanding of food and cooking can follow. Just basic preparation of ingredients-chop, slice, shred, press, pound and so on. Easy to understand instructions: saute, fry, bake, broil, steam-you get the picture. Readily available ingredients-foods that can be found in any market anywhere. Plus, they have to adhere to diabetic, heart and other health-food restrictions. I'll discuss that in another section.
2. The recipes must be Healthy. What do I mean by healthy? In a nutshell and simplifying things, diabetics are allowed 40 carbs per meal. Cut out the high carb-high starch foods. Corn-potatoes-peas-summer squash are the biggest threats for diabetics. The most common ingredients you will find are the so-called 'holy trinity': carrot-celery-onion and sometimes bell peppers. Why? These are lower carb, most readily available vegetables that diabetics, heart disease patients and other health issues that people have, are allowed to have. Boring? They don't have to be. My family is big on garlic—we're garlic eaters! I put a ton of

garlic cloves in almost every dish. Garlic adds depth of flavor. I discuss spices and their use in the forwards to both ebook cookbooks (the forwards are free to read, just download the samples). I use other low-carb, low-fat, low-starch, low-salt vegetables to 'stir' up the interest, such as fennel bulbs, asparagus, kale, greens, etc.

3. Heart disease/blood pressure patients must adhere to a low-fat diet, so we're cutting out high fat meats, cheeses and limiting high fat vegetables, oils, etc. Cutting out the 'white foods' as well—if it's white, it's bad for you. I mean, white flour, white sugar, white rice and so forth. These are deadly to those whom have diabetes and heart issues. Be mindful of other health issues people may have, such as myself with kidney failure and kidney transplant—I have to have a low-protein diet as well as low-carb, low-fat and low-salt.
4. A great big no-no to keep in mind to follow the Simple Healthy Fresh cooking is NO ADDED SALT! I realize that salt is addictive and difficult to give up, but I have been salt-free for 25 years and no longer miss it. Salt is deadly for diabetics, heart disease patients, those in organ failure. Plus added salt has so many health issues for the average person. A doctor once told me that natural foods have enough naturally occurring salt to more than meet daily nutritional requirements. That is why I created my line of Flavored Peppers (see the page on this site). I also advocate using citrus zest, garlic, spices to add appeal and flavor to dishes.
5. Fresh is the key for cooking Simple Healthy Fresh. What is fresh? Vegetables should be firm and smell like the earth, vegetable-like, look glossy but not waxed with clear skin and no bruising. The tagline for the series is 'nothing processed, pre-made, boxed, bagged or canned.' Meaning, the further the food is from natural, the less likely you should eat it. Cut back foods that come from fast food, although it is possible to eat healthy, as discussed in my article of the same name, make eating out rare. Eat canned, prepared food as few times as possible, such as canned ravioli, spaghetti, beef stew and so on. These have the unhealthiest ingredients, preservatives, salt that do the most damage to your body.
6. Canned vegetables can be ok, like tomatoes—sometimes more economical than fresh. Other vegetables are too processed when canned, having higher salt and preservative contents, like all types of beans, asparagus, spinach. Frozen vegetables are a much smarter choice, as long as you stay away from 'meal in a bag' vegetables. Look for fresh frozen or flash frozen whole vegetables. Mixed low-carb vegetables are ok as well, as long as they don't include corn-peas-potatoes-squash and other high-carb vegetables.
7. Lean meats, fish and meat substitutes are what you are looking for. I use a lot of chicken—mostly thighs, drumsticks, because they are cheapest to buy, more flavorful and more readily available to those on a budget. I chose not to eat a lot of fish, due to pollution, mercury, radiation, oil in our world's oceans and lakes. Since I, like so many people, have so many health issues, I'm not willing to add

to them. I also buy pork when it is on sale and look for sales on other meats, like lamb, buffalo, whatever is out there.

8. Final thought: So that is how to cook Simple Healthy Fresh and the rules I follow to include new recipes in the next cookbook. Is it difficult? Yes, but the healthy cooking is definitely worth it. As I say, your body will thank you. I've been following these rules for over 13 years now, this is 13 year's worth of research that I'm sharing with you. Now you know the basic rules, show me those Simple Healthy Fresh recipes!