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Living on WELL Street Blog: **“Create a Healthy Recipe Book”**

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“Recipes are important but only to a point. What’s more important than recipes is how we think about food, and a good cookbook should open up a new way of doing just that.” – Michael Symon, American chef, restaurateur, television personality and author

According to the Dietary Guidelines for Americans 2010, a healthy eating plan:

- Emphasizes fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and fat-free or low-fat milk and milk products
- Includes lean meats, poultry, fish, beans, eggs, and nuts
- Is low in saturated fats, trans fats, cholesterol, salt (sodium), and added sugars
- Stays within your daily calorie needs

I read recently that 50% of all meals in the U.S. are eaten outside of the home, and that those meals contain 134 more calories than a meal eaten at home (*Culture Clash*, by Dr. Steve Aldana). We will talk about restaurant eating in a future blog. For now, let’s talk about a healthy eating plan at home or work. Success in most any endeavor requires planning and preparation. To eat healthy we need a plan. A “healthy recipe book” can serve as a planning guide to ensure proper nutrition.

What is a “healthy” recipe? Does “low fat”, “low salt” or “light” really mean that a food is healthy? Not necessarily. Understanding what is good nutrition is not always easy, and creating recipes with a variety of ingredients makes it even more difficult. A simple starting point is to use “whole foods” in recipes. Whole foods are foods that are in their natural form – nothing added to them or taken from them. They have been processed or refined as little as possible and do not contain additives or artificial food ingredients. Whole foods like fruits, vegetables, whole grains, nuts and legumes provide nutritional value. Researching the nutritional values of various foods and experimenting with ingredients is a key part of the recipe creating process. It’s not all about tasting good; it’s also about being good for you.

We have created a worksite health promotion activity called **“Contribute to a Healthy Recipes Book”**. It encourages people to share recipes that have nutritional value and taste good, and will serve as a nutritional resource that the entire workforce can access and benefit from throughout the year. A recipe can be a family favorite or a new creation. Samples of the recipes should be shared and described. Or, invite a chef or dietician to conduct a healthy cooking demonstration or class.

A complete description of the activity, along with a variety of helpful resources, are available on the We Choose Health 365 website at:

<http://wechoosehealth365.com/asp/public/Page.aspx?pid=15548>.

Eat WELL!

Michael