



Rethinking Vacation Eating

I have a delightful young client who wanted to be prepared for her trip back home. She has a different eating style than her family, and this had been a barrier to enjoying her visits.

We started with the intention: what did she want? If she ate “perfectly” while there, what would that look like? She’d eat like she does in her own home; yet she realized it would be difficult to do in that setting. Plus, she wanted to enjoy some of the home cooked desserts she grew up with.

What would the worst case scenario look like? For my client, it would mean not eating the fresh, organic foods she was used to and eating way too many cookies and desserts. In this scenario, she would feel bad both physically and mentally. The inner critic would be unbearable.

What was the “middle path”? She knew right away: planning breakfasts and lunches that were similar to how she eats at home, compromising at dinner, and planning to enjoy a few treats. This approach felt doable and even exciting.

Once she had her intention, the rest was easy. She would go shopping when she got there; she made her grocery list while we spoke. A trip to the local farmers market would make a fun family outing.

Having a strategy allowed my client to look forward to her visit in a new way. In the past she would get there, get overwhelmed, and shut down. Then she’d be disappointed with herself. This time she had a plan that felt manageable. It worked: she had a great visit and was happy with her eating.

I share my client’s story because I think it is a common one. If you are the type of person who is disappointed when you don’t make consistently “good” choices, consider rethinking your approach. What is realistic? Where is the balance between eating reasonably well but not perfectly?

Unrealistic expectations can, if you are hooked into them, make the outcome worse. It is so easy to just give up when you can’t “do it right”. Then you are likely to eat more junk than if you’d aimed for the middle road to start with.

A healthy dose of fruits and vegetables will help you tolerate the extras with less impact. I’d gain weight if I ate extras all the time, but vacation can be a time to splurge a little.

I had fried conch last month while we were sailing in the British Virgin Islands. I don’t eat fried foods very often – but it was part of the local cuisine and I wanted to try it. I also made a conscious effort to eat as many vegetables as possible.



Making Barbeque Healthy

I love barbequed food; it is easy and delicious. Unfortunately this form of cooking also carries health risks. Grilling meat or cooking it at high temperatures creates heterocyclic amines (HCAs), a mutagen that causes changes in the DNA which could lead to cancer. Another type of mutagen, polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs), is formed from the smoke when fat from animal foods drips onto hot coals.

There are several things you can do to significantly minimize the risk of PAHs and HCAs:

- Use lean meats and skinless poultry
- Grill at low temperatures
- Don’t overcook

Dried out meats have more HCAs than moist meats. Frequent turning helps.

Marinating lowers HCA levels, possibly by removing the compounds that turn into HCAs. It doesn’t matter what is in the marinade or how long the food sits in the liquid. Microwaving also lowers HCAs: microwave for the first 1 1/2 to 2 minutes and pour off the juices.

Skip the pan drippings. For any well done meat, the drippings can have more HCAs than the meat or poultry itself.

Fish tends to have less HCAs than meat or poultry, unless it is charred. Veggie burgers and cooked vegetables generate little or none; and cruciferous vegetables may actually help the liver detoxify HCAs.

Using these techniques can lower the HCA content by 70 to 90%. I still enjoy barbequed meat, I just pay attention to how it is cooked and use marinades.

Recipe of the Month

I have two recipes to share this month: grilled chicken with a ancho chili marinade which is especially tender, and a kale salad that is an easy and delicious way to get your greens. www.HealthyHabitsCoach.wordpress.com.

Eating Strategies for Vacations and Events

Do vacations or events throw you and your eating habits off balance? I can help you with strategies, and teach you tools that will enhance your healthy habits.

Call me to find out more: 707 431-7524.

Kathy Nichols: Life Coach & Registered Dietitian

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