



Weekly Tip:

Getting chocolates for Valentine's?

If you are like me, you can't have chocolate or candy laying around without eating it but when someone gives it to me I have a hard time saying no. So out of politeness I accept and then I eat.

What are you going to do?

You don't want to hurt your friend's or your lover's feelings by not accepting or accepting and resenting so this Valentine's Day—be proactive!

Now is the time to let him or her or them know that if they are thinking about getting you anything edible this romantic holiday that you would prefer something you can wear so at least the calories are sure to be worked off! ;)

Money for Nothing

Do you know that the busier we are - the fatter and poorer we are as well? As our time decreases, our food budget and our calorie counts increase proportionately. Why do you think that is??

It's all in the convenience products that we resort to in order to make our lives easier. When we are busy the last thing that we want to do is take the time to cook a healthy meal so we resort to what we believe is the next best thing - pre-packaged and processed foods.

Look in your cupboards—how many bags of noodles and sauce or Sidekicks do you have? Condensed soups? Minute or Instant rice? If I opened your freezer would I see oven-ready chicken fingers? French Fries? Fish sticks or hot dogs?

How often does your family eat from a paper bag or off a tray? Do they recognize your voice at the drive through? Do you eat out at any restaurant more than twice a month

What does your family eat when you are running late and dinner needs to get ready? I guarantee that the answer to that questions will go a long way to explaining why your food budget and waistline is expanding.

You have heard me say a million times (and if you haven't yet—you will), weight loss is not about dieting it is about living and living healthy.

Convenience foods, restaurant foods and especially fast foods are NOT conducive to a healthy waistline or a healthy budget. The major increase of obesity in our nation today has been directly linked to the change in dietary habits and availability of more and more convenience foods at home and in restaurants.

If you are reading this and already thinking "Yeah but..." then we have a lot of work to do because you are already in defense mode looking for excuses to continue the habits that have increased your budget as well as the numbers on the scale. Only you can decide what is more important to you and your family—a healthy lifestyle of a convenient one.

Now don't get me wrong - eating healthy and staying on budget doesn't have to be a time consuming project but it does take planning and dedication to changing those drive-through, five minute meal habits.

Planning your weekly meals in advance and doing as much ahead of time as you can will make you more likely to stick to your plan. Chop vegetables, mix sauces and defrost meats to save time.

Having a weekly meal plan will also save you money because you can shop once for everything you will need. You can make a list from your plan - and pick up what you need at the grocery store. Have a budget in place and only take as much CASH with you as you budgeted—not having credit or debit cards will force you to stick to your list and compare prices.

It will also help you to avoid impulse choices and expensive pre-packaged convenience foods that are high in fat, sodium and preservatives. In my household, we feed two adults, a teenage boy and a 5 year old on \$100 a week of \$400 a month for groceries and this includes staples such as toilet paper and dish soap!

I understand that I do have more time as I work from home than other couples who may both work outside the home, but please remember that I have not always been where I am today. As a single mom with a very limited budget, I was still able to balance both nutrition and money through planning.

Only you can decide - what is more important to you?

Recipe Corner

Delicious and nutritious snack and meal ideas that are perfect for the whole family!
Straight from Michelle's kitchen!



Vegetarian Stuffed Peppers

Stuffing: In a medium skillet sauté in 1 tbsp. olive oil: 1 medium onion diced, 1 or 2 cloves of fresh garlic minced. When onions become transparent add 1/2 cup chopped celery, 1/2 cup chopped zucchini, salt, pepper, basil and oregano to taste. When vegetables are tender, add 2 cups of brown rice that had been previously cooked. Stir well and set aside.

Sauce: In a small sauce pan mix one large can of tomato juice with 2 Tbsp. worchestshire sauce, and 1 tbsp. molasses - blend well and heat until warm. Set aside.

Assemble: Choose 4 large green bell peppers, slice off the tops and remove core and seeds. Wash thoroughly. Place upright in a previously sprayed (non-stick) casserole dish. Fill peppers with stuffing putting any extra around the bottom of peppers inside dish. Pour sauce equally over peppers letting all excess pool on the bottom of dish. Top each pepper with a sliced tomato.

Cover and bake for 30 minutes.

Remove from heat and sprinkle tops of pepper with 1/2 cup bread crumbs and 1/2 cup shredded parmesan or mozzarella cheese.

Bake uncovered for another 10 minutes or until cheese is golden brown.

Delicious as an entrée or as a side dish!

The Truth about being Enriched

What does it mean when we see the words 'enriched flour' on the list of ingredients? Isn't something that is enriched better for us???

You would think so, but in actuality, the exact opposite is true. The term 'enriched' when used to describe flour actually describes the process in which the grain is stripped of the bran and the germ - you know, the parts that contain the vitamins and minerals???

The reason that this is done is to give the flour and its products a finer texture and longer shelf life—it is the reason that white bread is so soft and stays so soft long after it really should.

When the bran and germ are removed from the wheat, your body doesn't absorb it the way that it should. It breaks it down far too quickly flooding the body with sugars which your body then stores as fat. This does not happen with whole grains—the bran and the germ take longer to break down causing a slow release of sugars that your body burns off before it absorbs and stores.

Unfortunately - to some really great advertising campaigns it is not always easy to choose bread and grain products that are not made from 'enriched' flour - some of these products will have unbleached white flour which is just enriched flour that looks brown! Brown is not whole grain.

Did you know that even 'Multi-Grain' is not even whole grain? Well it may or may not be—but choosing a grain product based solely on the color or the title 'Multi-Grain' the only thing that multi-grain really means is that there is more than one grain involved—they could all be enriched.

The only way to be sure you are eating what is best for you, your family and for all your bodies is to read the label. The words **WHOLE GRAIN** should be listed first in the list of ingredients . If it isn't—then you don't want to eat it - scratch that. You may want to eat it - but you shouldn't eat it.

Be good to your body and it will be good to you!

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