

Why You Should Prepare Your Own Food



I learned how to cook at a fairly young age. I'm not sure what I first learned how to prepare, it might have been a fried egg. I've cooked a lot of fried eggs since then and continue to prepare them as my main breakfast staple. There have been some pretty good cooks in my family starting with my grandmother and continuing down through my mom and my aunt. They taught me the basics and I've gone on to learn a few other things on my own. My culinary repertoire is definitely limited and I won't be a contestant on "The Next Top Chef" challenge any time soon, but that doesn't stop me from preparing almost all the meals I consume these days.

Besides enjoying the process of meal planning and preparation, the primary reason I cook is so that I'm eating only meals that nourish my body while also keeping my blood sugar and insulin levels in check. Translation: I make sure that I don't get flabby ever again. My only requirement, besides being generally low in starchy carbs, is that every meal must take only thirty minutes or less to prepare from start to table – sounds a bit like a Rachael Ray program on the *Food Network*.

There are quite a few sub-topics related to this issue, some of which I'm thinking are also a bit controversial – at least in the sense that not everyone may agree with me. That's fine, healthy debate and discussion are always good and I'm willing to have my mind changed when presented with convincing arguments accompanied by solid proof. For now, I'll simply outline the related issues and make note to expand on them in future posts.

Eating In or Eating Out?

Perhaps the strongest argument for preparing your own food is that you have much more control over what ultimately winds up on your plate. Don't get me wrong, eating out can be a very enjoyable experience and can also provide a welcome break from cooking and washing dishes back at the ranch, but it's when you find yourself eating most of your meals out that problems set in. Being presented with a lot of choices on a restaurant menu can often lead to both overeating and making poor nutritional choices. Save evenings out at a restaurant for special occasions or for when you and the family could use a well-deserved break.

Meal Planning

No meal actually gets prepared without first taking a trip to the grocery store. That's unless you live on a farm where you can go out your backdoor and gather eggs, milk a cow, pick fresh veggies, and also slaughter a cow and a few chickens while out in the barnyard. The rest of us have to make at least one or two trips during the week to gather groceries for the meals we'll consume during the week.

There are two basic approaches to grocery shopping:

1. Stock up on the staples such as meat, vegetables, dairy products, etc. and fill the larder. You can then decide what you'll eat right before meal time or a bit earlier in the day. This method works for getting something on the table, but doesn't always result in the healthiest decisions. Many times, the deadly combination of hunger and fatigue drive this decision.

What often happens is that the path of least resistance from pantry to dinner table is taken.

How many times have you arrived home from work thoroughly exhausted, stressed out, and famished? You're so blinded by hunger that you immediately head for the pantry and grab the first thing within reach like a bag

of sour cream and onion chips or a bag of double stuffed Oreos. You then wind up hating yourself by the time you roll into bed.

2. The other approach, and the one I advocate, is weekly meal planning. This approach simply involves planning all your meals for the coming week prior to setting out to the grocery store. I only consider lunch and dinner when doing my own meal planning as breakfast for me is always some variation (or lack thereof) of an egg and some kind of breakfast meat. I don't even get too precise about what I'll eat on each particular day of the week – I just mentally pencil in suggestions and then make sure that I have all the necessary ingredients to prepare that meal when I decide to have it. This may sound similar to the first method above, but all my meals for the week are set in advance – I'm just flexible on which days of the week I choose to eat them.

I'll have a lot more to say on the topic of meal planning in a future post, but for now it's enough to note how important it is to meal preparation.

How Much Variety?

This is another topic that's important enough to warrant a post all its own, but again, for now, I'll just mention it here because of its importance to meal planning and meal preparation. This is also a topic that I have a rather strong opinion on and one that should prove to be controversial.

A long held belief is that as humans, we need to have a lot of variety in what we eat. After all, our brains are so much more advanced than other creatures in the food chain, that unless we get sufficient variety in the food we eat, we'll keel over face first into our dinner plates from insufferable boredom. If this were the case, then I should have passed on to the Great Beyond ages ago. The menu I feast on today is limited to

just a handful of food items, which I rotate through almost like clockwork on a weekly basis.

I'll leave further discussion of this topic to a future post, but it should be pretty clear how eating a limited menu greatly facilitates meal planning and grocery shopping. It also has proven for me to be highly effective in shedding fat and keeping it off.

The main point I'm attempting to get across here, is that when you take over control of planning and preparing what you eat on a weekly basis, then you ward off the temptation of making unhealthy eating choices and also control the portions that you consume – all of which play a big part in controlling your weight.

One final topic that I have yet to mention is the importance of knowing the basics of cooking. The good news is that learning to cook well enough to prepare nutritious dishes that will help keep your waistline in check is extremely easy. Have a look at some of the recipes I've posted here on PracticalCarbs.com and see for yourself just how simple and easy they are to prepare – believe me, if I can prepare them, then so can you!