

The 7th Day Eat Everything You Crave Diet

A Realistic Eating Lifestyle

For people who LOVE FOOD

Let's face it...

I love ice cream, chocolate, cookies, cake, fried chicken, pizza, cheese, butter, pancakes, peanut butter, potato chips, bread, bagels & cream cheese, flavored coffee creamer, burgers, cheesesteaks, mac & cheese, mashed potatoes with sour cream, French fries, nachos, corn bread, pasta, shrimp scampi, spaghetti and meatballs, grilled steak, loaded baked potatoes, bacon, sweet n sour chicken, dumplings, chicken nugget dipping sauces and almost every delicious, high calorie food in existence.

It's not healthy, I know that...but I can't change who I am. I'm so sick of fad diets and high protein muck. I just want to lose weight and then Keep It Off!

But how? I have an emotional relationship with food. I eat when I'm happy, I binge when I'm sad. Food helps me vent when angry and fills voids when lonely. Sharing comforting, traditional foods with family feels like home and celebrating the holidays wouldn't be the same without time tested recipes and delicious favorites. Cake and ice cream are Birthday rewards and wine relieves stress. Food makes everything special! It is a comfortable paradise that whisks me away, soothes my soul and makes me feel good.

At 60 years old change is Traumatic! Dieting transforms my eating joy into painful drudgery and I dread it. Yeah, I know, I know... I need to lose weight but quite honestly, the chances of long term success with

traditional dieting is a big fat ZERO...doomed to fail. I should know. I've failed at lots of diets and have the reoccurring fat medals to prove it.

So, I set out on a journey to find the perfect life-style change...one I could actually live with *and look forward to!*

Here is my journey...

I decided to eat healthy, low calorie foods 6 days a week and on the 7th day EAT WHATEVER I WANTED. I did this for 18 months and lost 46.5 pounds and have not only KEPT IT OFF but continue to average a weekly half pound loss!

I went to Florida for a week, Alabama for a week and California for a week vacationing and ate what I wanted. I also celebrated with food on the Holidays. Then, I hopped right back on the low calorie 6-day meal plan. Of course, I gained weight on these cheat weeks...my body can efficiently store calories, but I lost them easily the first one to two weeks back on my plan. It didn't matter if I gained some back or how long it took to lose it, I was ENJOYING my life AND continued to lose weight afterwards. I didn't get frustrated. I told myself, "It took years of eating bliss to gain this weight and it will take years to get rid of it."

So how does it work? What keeps me on track? **The 7th day reward.** After eating low calorie meals for 6 days, on that 7th day I give myself permission to eat **whatever I want!** Cheat day, feast day! I have something to look forward to at the end of each week! I count down the days. I plan what I want to eat, look at recipes, check restaurant menus, narrow down my choices and prepare.

One thing I learned pretty quickly is that portion size decreased dramatically as the months passed. I learned that my eyes were bigger than my stomach and after days and weeks and months of smaller, low calorie meals, my stomach could only hold so much. I got full sooner, so

I had to reduce the volume of predetermined goodies and concentrate on quality, not quantity.

The first few weeks I baked whole cakes and cooked full course dinners. I tried to eat a big breakfast, lunch and dinner...after-all this was cheat day and I could eat whatever I wanted, but learned that after that big breakfast of eggs, bacon and pancakes, I was full. I simply could not eat lunch, dinner and dessert. My digestive system had shrunk to hold **logical** portions. I had a lot of leftovers that I gave away at work or gave to friends. I put some in the freezer to eat on another cheat day, but my cravings would change week to week, so my husband ate a good portion of it. I gradually learned to buy smaller portions of amazing foods and to plan on an outstanding breakfast, smaller dinner and magnificent dessert. For me, sweets take precedent, but that is what makes this life-choice so cool- You can tweak it to fit your cravings. I never felt deprived because I wasn't!

Exercise- yep, I knew of its importance, but how to make it fun? How do you look forward to working out? It was just another drudgery that I did not look forward to. I had to find my golden, calorie-burning happy-dance. Maybe you like going to the gym. I do, but just twice, then I lose interest. Those first 2 days though, I am ready to make it work! Then, the 3rd time, not so much. I'd get bored and began to dread the effort involved to dress then drive there. I would make excuses. "I'll do it tomorrow", but tomorrow never comes. So here is what I did.

I found the perfect space in my house, listened to my favorite gotta-move music with my MP3 player with headphones and danced around like no one was watching. No one was watching...thank goodness because I just move to the music anyway I want. I march around, sway side to side, hop around, run in place, prance around my kitchen island, throw my arms up, kick and even do a warm-up awkward "ballet". It

really is quite comical, but OH SO FUN! Those calories burn off as I dance and sweat. Sometimes I add weights during the ever-changing routines and song choices. It never gets old. There are always new and inspiring songs to download. I dance at night after everyone is in bed, but it can be any time of day! My husband learned the hard way to avoid me during these workouts. Once, after he went to bed and I was in exercise mode, he forgot to tell me something and got out of bed to tell me. I was deep in dancing Zen, music blasting in my ears, when he tapped my shoulder and scared the crap out of me. I screamed. Startled the heck out of both of us. Lesson learned. He stays far from the exercise zone. I don't dance for hours. My happy dance is usually not longer than 30 minutes. 30 minutes burning calories. Food taken-in is metabolized into energy and you need to burn some of that food energy or else your body will be happy to store it for you in your fat deposit bank... thighs, butt, arms, breasts, belly. Dance it away!

I also enjoy riding my bike around my neighborhood – just like a kid again. I don't do marathons but if you do, get to it! I like to work outside in my flowerbeds, weeding and mulching. I like to take walks on nice days and swim when I can. If the weather is bad or I've had a lazy day, I dance. Doing projects around the house are calorie burners. Clean out a closet, hang pictures, rearrange the garage stuff, redecorate, clean out your kitchen cabinets. Cleaning house or cutting grass with a push mower is an amazing workout!

Accountability is another important element in this journey. It is a good idea to have a coach... someone who holds you accountable but doesn't judge...someone you can call or talk to once a month to share your progress. This will keep you on track. When I think, *I've got ice cream in my fridge. I could eat some now*", I remember my health coach. I keep true to myself and I don't want to let myself OR my coach down. I just tell myself... cheat day is just a few days away. You can make it! And

your coach will be so proud. I suggest you do not use a spouse or partner. My spouse, although I love him very much, is an enabler. He has a history of suggesting fast food runs or evening ice cream adventures. My coach is a licensed Health Coach. I was assigned her as part of my health care plan for my pre-existing obesity diagnosis. Obesity! Damn those health insurance people for pointing out and focusing on my plumpness! But it was one of the best things to happen to me. I didn't see it that way at first. I was insulted. How dare they assign a probably young, vegan, exercise focused, fit, Health Coach to tell me how to lose weight! She was not going to tell ME anything that I didn't already know. That was what I thought. Opinionated and stubborn, I was ready for our first phone conversation. But to my surprise she didn't try to shove any healthy crap down my throat. She listened patiently to my previous dieting journeys. Then she said, "Try what works for you and I will be here to suggest changes or ideas as needed to make you successful". Wow...this disarmed me. I could work with this young lady! She understood me. So, I wanted to show her I could make it work. I came up with my plan. I asked her, "Is it true that you can re-boot your metabolism by eating a high calorie meal?". She said, "No". What did she know with her Master's degree in nutrition? Lol. I remember early on telling her that I had a piece of chocolate cake on my 7th day and her replying that it was fine to have a "small "slice of cake once in a while. I did not share with her that the slice was monumental in size and it took me a couple of eating sessions that day to finish it. lol

My low-calorie meals:

Breakfast:

I start the day with a big glass of water (I have one pill I take when I wake up) My day begins with hydration. Then I may have a cup of tea or decaf coffee. I like sweet, as you now know, and it took a while to figure

out how to make a low calorie, yummy cup of coffee. I use a sugar free vanilla flavored creamer (just a touch-about a teaspoon or two- enough to sweeten a bit)) along with Almond Milk (unsweetened vanilla 30 calories). I use Almond milk all the time. The calorie difference is worth it and I like the taste! Whole milk one cup is 146 calories, 2% Milk one cup 122 calories, 1% milk one cup 103 calories and Almond milk only 30 calories per cup!

I look at it this way. When I wake each day, I have a batch of allotted calories that I can eat. I can choose to drink 122 calories in milk or I can choose to add a slice of cheese in my soup for added flavor. You have to choose how and what you want to sacrifice.

Breakfast is either an egg-veggie omelet creation or high fiber cereal with fruit.

My Veggie Omelet

Chop a handful of peppers and onions and sauté them in a pinch of olive oil in a small frying pan. Whip one egg with a dash of milk and seasoning in a small bowl while the veggies cook until tender. Turn down the heat and add the egg mixture. Cover with foil and cook until golden brown on bottom, then attempt to flip it in the pan. Sometimes it does not cooperate, but that's okay... turn it over in parts. I sprinkle about a teaspoon of finely grated cheddar cheese on top just to add a bit more flavor, cover with foil, turn off the heat and serve when cheese is melted. Hint: Any vegetable is fine. I've use broccoli or shredded carrots. Also, I love sautéed onions so I use a lot. You'd be surprised at how much one egg added to veggies makes!

Cereal

I use a very small amount (only a fourth to a third cup) of high fiber cereal (Post Wheat n Bran squares), some chopped walnuts, raisins, fresh blueberries, banana and Almond milk. It is important to not go

hog-wild with the high calorie walnuts and raisins. This alternative is a sweet and healthy treat for me twice weekly.

Lunch

If I am active, then lunch is essential. I like to use one slice of Dave's Killer Bread 21 Whole Grains and Seeds (120 calories/ thin sliced 60 calories) with about 3 tablespoons of garlic hummus and at times thinly sliced avocado. I cut it into fourths so it appears dainty and lasts longer. I know lunch is important, but I have to be honest here. I ate this lunch for the first 8 months, but since then I started eating breakfast later and skipping lunch and instead drink a cup of herbal tea with Almond milk or decaf ice coffee or snacked on a banana or apple slices.

Dinner:

Soup, soup, soup! I love soup! Limitless combinations of veggies, meat, beans and flavors. I make a huge soup-pot every 3 weeks and freeze containers to defrost and eat as needed. I eat this almost every evening for dinner. It never gets old for me. I change soups combinations using either chicken, turkey sausage, hamburger, beef and at times ham or pork. I use a variety of beans like black beans, navy, pinto, great northern and lentils. Quinoa is a nice additive. It is healthy and reminds me of wild rice in soup. The broth is either chicken or beef. Vegetables make up the bulk of my soup creations. I always use fresh carrots, onion and celery, then add frozen vegetables like kale, green beans, spinach and sometimes lima beans. (I usually stay away from starchy beans like lima and peas) Sometimes I use canned tomatoes or fresh mushrooms. During the summer I use zucchini or yellow squash. I season my soup creations with bullion, garlic, smoked paprika and sometimes basil, rosemary, pepper depending on my mood.

Keep in mind that meat is higher in calories so I keep this at a minimum.

You can substitute fish for the meat and add jalapenos, red peppers or hot sauce for a kick. That is the magic of soup. It can be anything you like. You can change the meat marinades for flavor variety. You can cook Italian turkey sausage or burgers on the grill then use this flavorful meat in soup.

The key is to throw in massive amounts of low calorie veggies, minimal meats and some high-fiber beans (canned or dried)

Soup

1 or 2 sweet Vidalia onions chopped

2-3 Chicken breasts diced into small pieces and marinated overnight in McCormick Grill Mates marinade. I use either Garlic Herb and Wine or Smoky Applewood (sometimes Mojito Lime)

Carrots- large bag chopped to desired size- I like small bite size pieces

Celery- all stalks chopped

2 bags of frozen kale

1-2 bags of green beans

1 can of black beans

1 can great northern beans

*optional ½ cup uncooked Quinoa

Bullion (I use Orrington Farms Broth Base & Seasoning)

Smoked paprika, pepper, garlic powder (or fresh garlic 2 cloves pressed)

Heat about 4 Tbsp of olive oil in your soup pot and cook the onion till tender. You could also sauté green peppers if desired.

Add meat and seer.

Add half broth, Add all vegetables and spices

Stir well and then add the rest of the broth.

Bring to boil- then turn heat all the way down and simmer on low for several hours or until the carrots are tender.

Also, you can soak lentils or any dry bean overnight and use in place of canned beans

That's what I do- you can get creative and do soup your way!

Or, if soup makes you pout...

What about salads? Yes, salad can be fun too! I like a coleslaw cabbage mix (no dressing on it- just the red and green cabbage, carrot mix) or a variety of lettuce with tomato, cucumber, red/yellow/orange sweet peppers. I add small chopped pieces of apple or fresh strawberries or fresh blueberries. I also sprinkle on a small amount of roasted walnuts (don't go overboard- they are healthy but caloric). Sometimes I add dill pickle, or onion or fresh mushroom. For protein I add a can of albacore Tuna in water or a hardboiled egg or cooked, cooled Quinoa. Dressing can shoot calories to the moon so I use a yogurt-based dressing Bolthouse Farms Cilantro Avocado Yogurt Dressing in refrigerated section of grocery store. Only 40 calories for 2 Tbsp. and delicious! (Compare to 2 Tbsp. of ranch dressing at 150 calories) I am not a fan of yogurt but this stuff is fantastically flavorful with a fraction of the calories.

Some nights I get a small Subway or WAWA turkey sub with lettuce, tomato and dill pickles- I add my own additional Claussen pickles and loads of fresh local tomatoes and some of my yogurt salad dressing instead of mayonnaise. Some days my husband and I have date lunch at Panera Bread. I get the pick two, chicken noodle soup and turkey sandwich -the lowest calorie items. Gives me a delicious, low calorie eating-out treat at times.

Alternatives: Frozen Vegetable Lasagna- I cook as directed and add cooked broccoli to increase the volume and decrease calories.

Spiraled zucchini with tomatoes, onion and mushrooms sauce

Snacks!

A Snack in the evening is a big part of this success. I eat dinner early (4:30-5:30pm), so later in the evening I am hungry. Presentation and variety is important. I place a variety of snack choices on a plate in small quantities, spread out to make it look like an amazing assortment and then I take my time snacking on them, enjoying each bite. Keep in mind the total calories of your choices. I try to stay under 200 calories. Here are some snack choices that I like:

Lightly Salted Rice Cakes (one or two)- These are like eating cardboard but I learned a trick that makes them tastier. I put them on a piece of foil and cook them on the toast setting in the toaster oven! They taste better toasted. I flip them and toast each side and sprinkle a thin pinch of shredded cheddar or Colby jack cheese - cook until melted. I have also sprinkled Parmesan cheese on top with the final toasting to brown lightly.

Laughing Cow Cheese Wedges: Garlic and Herb Only 35 calories!

Pretzels- (8) Look at the calorie content on the bags and get the one with least calories. I get Walmart's brand for a buck. I break these up into smaller pieces and eat plain or dip in a wedge of Laughing Cow Cheese.

Off The Eaten Path rice, peas, black bean veggie crisps (8 chips)

Celery sticks, Carrot sticks (as much as you want)

Grapes (8)

A small Halo Orange,

3-4 small Apple slices (also good dipped in Laughing Cow cheese)

Fresh strawberries (4)

Fresh blueberries (8)

Almonds (about 6-8)

Unsweetened pineapple and cottage cheese(1/4 cup each)

Low calorie yogurt or Greek yogurt

Fluids!

My health coach stresses the importance of water throughout the day. I am trying to work on this because it does not come naturally. I have to remind myself to drink! So, I flavor my water with teas and herbal teas or brew decaf coffee... Hot in winter, Iced in summer. My coach also gave me tips on how to flavor water naturally using mint leaves or cucumber slices. I am one of those people who like a little coffee in their creamer, so I had to make adjustments to the high calorie madness. I use Almond Milk (only 30 calories for one cup and 15 for half a cup!) and a pinch of low calorie creamer. I am not a fan of artificial sweeteners...I prefer the real thing, a more natural solution BUT when cutting calories, a pinch of artificial will do just fine.

I am a sugar addict, I admit it. I LOVE sweets. When I eat sweets, I crave more sweets so sugar is absolutely off limits on my healthy days, no matter the calories.

This is my journey. Could it work for you? Yes! But you must tweak it to fit your preferences and life style. Everybody is different. You need to decide what low-calorie foods will work for you and you need to find a fun way to exercise. Patience is the key. This is not instant gratification. This is a lifestyle. This is a new way of enjoying all the foods you love

without the guilt. You can do this! You have the power to take control and change. I believe in you.

How to begin?

Make a plan. What will you eat for breakfast, lunches, dinners? Buy the ingredients and make soup to freeze. Get a variety of snacks. You don't have to empty your cabinets of all the "bad" stuff, but you do have to set a rule to follow. These high calorie items are off limits until your 7th day. You can eat them then. You can wait.

Decide how you are going to exercise- what works for you- and then do it! Do projects around the house to burn calories, gym workout, walk around the neighborhood, ride a bike, or dance. You decide!

Tell your family and peeps of your new eating plan. They will understand when you tell them today is not my cheat day.

Enjoy life knowing you are never deprived. Food will always be an integral part of your life. On that 7th day, reward yourself with the joys of food.

When you reach your goal weight

When I reach my goal weight, my plan is to have one modest cheat day weekly with one delicious meal or dessert and then one "all I want to eat day" and continue with 5 low calorie days weekly to maintain my weight. I know what happens when I eat what I want every day...I gain weight and it slowly creeps back on and soon my clothes get tighter and I go into denial. I start avoiding the scales. Guilt takes over and everything plummets from there. I don't want to repeat this pattern. For the first time I have hope that I can beat this battle and live the rest of my life healthier and happier. Never say never, but I can say for the first time, I am hopeful.