

Just One New Resolution This Year

If you're not in the mood, or just being realistic, about making a whole list of New Year's Resolutions this time around, how about making just one? Try this one on for size: **I WILL DO MORE HOME COOKING.** Think about it. Maybe you start with just once every other week, but it that's more than you've been doing, you're on your way. The more cooking you do, the more control you have over what goes into the food, onto your plate and into your mouth.

Decide or Decode: You will be the one deciding how much fat, salt or sugar is on your plate, instead of trying to decode the tiny little numbers on a nutrition facts label. Do you want your foods prepared with heart-healthy vegetable oils? Then use them. Are you ready for less salt and more flavor? You will be the one adding the seasonings you enjoy. You can experiment with new flavors a little at a time. Take them at your own pace, instead of getting smacked in the face with overpowering chili when you weren't expecting it.

Do you want more fiber, or more antioxidants, or more vitamins and minerals? Make your potato soup with a base of roasted pureed cauliflower and you'll get all three, with a lot less sodium than what comes out of a can. There are cookbooks out there on how to get more vegetables onto your (or your family's) plate without ever tasting the difference. Give yourself the big pat on your back when the food is devoured and you know the health benefits it has given you.

There are plenty of resources to help you out. Check your newspaper for local cooking classes at grocery or kitchen stores. These might not always give you the kind of recipe you want, but they're a great place to start building your skills. Once you've mastered a technique you can modify the ingredients to suit yourself.

The web of course has zillions of recipes, healthy and not so hot. But when you're in control, you decide which one to print and how to adapt it. If the web is not for you, browse your local library. Borrow a different cookbook each month, and try a couple of new recipes. If you find a book you use 6 times, then it's worth buying.

If time is your enemy, dig that slow cooker out of the back of the cupboard. These things are

just super! You can prep the food the evening before and refrigerate the ingredients that need it. Next morning it'll take 10 minutes to put it all in the cooker and turn it on. By the time you walk in the door that evening the house will be full of the aroma of a good hot meal. There are cookbooks for slow cookers, for every style of food from good old American to Thai and Indian.

If you need fast cooking, get a small pressure cooker. It's practically impossible to "blow up" the new versions, and there are dozens of cookbooks for them too. You can have a 3 course meal, cooked in one pot, ready to eat in minutes. How's that for control, and ease of cleanup?

One place to be a little cautious is the TV. Yes, the chefs are great personalities. And their recipes look delicious. But what's prepared on TV tends to be high in fat, salt and calories. Their food safety skills are not the best either. So watch to learn skills. Listen to pick up new seasoning and flavoring ideas. But keep yourself in control when it comes to ingredients.

Here's an easy dinner dish that will add color, flavor, fiber and antioxidants to your table. If you prefer a Mexican slant to your meal, add ½ teaspoon of taco seasoning when you add the oregano. Happy, Healthy New Year!

Tomato and Squash Stir Fry

2 slices turkey bacon	½ tsp vegetable oil
2 cups EACH sliced yellow squash and zucchini	1 tsp minced garlic
2 tsp dried oregano or Italian seasoning	1 cup sliced onion
1 ½ cups cherry tomatoes cut in halves	¼ tsp ground pepper
¼ tsp salt optional	

Heat non-stick skillet over medium high heat. Add bacon and cook 1-2 minutes per side until browned. Remove from skillet. Add oil to skillet along with garlic and onion. Cook and stir for 1 minute. Add squash and cook 5 minutes, stirring constantly until crisp-tender and slightly browned. Chop or crumble bacon. Stir tomatoes, oregano, pepper and bacon into squash mixture. Cook another minute or two until completely hot. Serve hot. Serves 6.

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