

2 UNIQUE



KELLI LEWTON

Let's spill the beans about coffee

S wise mocha, raspberry, vanilla fantasia, double nut fudge, almond bliss, Hawaiian rhapsody, hazelnut, chocolate, chocolate caramel just to name a few. What could all these flavors have in common? Ice cream? Let me give you more lingo ... single, double, cap, with a hat, dabble, mothers helper, joe, java ... all Ah coffee!

These little brown beans seem to be going through a metamorphosis. You could be sipping your latte in a rustic Vail-like ski lodge surroundings with stone, wood and a fireplace without ever leaving town at Caribou Coffee. Perhaps you enjoy sipping your joe while surfing the net at the Cyber Cafe or a good book and good company can be enjoyed 24 hours at the Lone Star. For a great decaf cappuccino on a comfy couch and a little jazz to add to the experience, try the Coffee Beanery.

Yep, I'm talking about the coffee shops of downtown Birmingham. Just when you thought, how many bean shops can one small town support? The largest U.S. coffee chain is moving into town ... Starbucks! Not only is there the traditional shops in the neighborhood, you can also pick up cappuccino at the Mobil station or drive through the newly opened "Joe to Go," of unique design, neighboring Birmingham on the west side of Woodward to get your favorite brewed drink of choice. Wow, so many choices! We're coffee crazy!

On an average, a regular house coffee (i.e. brew of the day without any modifications) will start around \$1.35. A cup of specialty coffee of cappuccino will start around \$2.25 and depending on what you add to it, such as flavored syrup, etc. can go as high as \$4. The Specialty Coffee Association reports there are more than 7,200 coffee outlets in the United States. The morning drink of yesterday has become an American ritual of unique conceptions, experiences and romance. We have become informed consumers that are looking for great quality, freshness and taste. In some ways it parallels the microbreweries presence of the past decade. We seem to have a hankering for the rich European tastes of the past v. the stamped out, mass-produced products of today.

History

As rich as coffee is in taste, it is also rich in history. Historians have traced its discovery to the 10th century and even believe cultivation may have begun as early as AD 576. One of the earliest recorded legends report that a young Abyssian goat shepherd witnessed his goats eating these green colored berries which seemed to cause the goats to "dance" or frolic about. Actual coffee cultivation was rare until the 16th or 18th century when extensive planting of the tree occurred in the Yemen region of Arabia. Coffee consumption increased in the 17th century with Dutch colonies and the French transplanting to the island of Martinique in the West Indies, which was the genesis of the great coffee plantation of Latin America.

The soil in which coffee is grown must be rich, moist and absorbent enough to accept water readily but sufficiently loose to allow rapid drainage of excess water. The best soil is composed of leaf mold, other organic matter and disintegrated volcanic rock. Although coffee trees are damaged easily by frost, they are cultivated in cooler regions where temperatures range from 13 degrees to 26 degrees Celsius. Coffee plantations are usually maintained at sea level to the tropical frost level at about 1,800

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LOOKING AHEAD

What to watch for in Taste next week:

- Focus on Wine
- Meat loaf

One size fits all

By PROGGY MARTINELLI-EVERTS
SPECIAL WRITER

"To lengthen thy life, lessen thy meals" - Benjamin Franklin

Obesity is an epidemic of alarming proportions and contributes to a number of serious health risks. One out of three Americans is considered overweight and the numbers keep growing. Sad but true, our children are growing up fat, too. The most dangerous aspect is that they will grow up fat and have a shorter life span, not to mention the psychological problems for overweight kids.

The new year brings new opportunities and goals. But really, how much new diet advice can you stand. Weight loss is the subject of literally hundreds of books, and stories about losing weight appear regularly on television, and in newspapers and magazines.

Overweight refers to an excess of total body weight including fat, bone and muscle. A football player or weight lifter would probably be considered overweight though not necessarily obese. Obesity refers specifically to an excess of body fat. Americans eat less calories today than we did at the turn of the century, but due to labor saving devices, we are fatter because we're less active.

At least 25 percent of us have a sedentary job, do no heavy house or yard work, do not pursue any sport or fitness program and avoid physical activity during the day. We take elevators whenever possible and drive to the corner store. Weight gain seems inevitable.

Are you overweight? The pounds can add up over the years and before we know it, we're risking our health with unneeded weight. An easy way to tell if you're in the "safe" zone is to test your Body Mass Index.

Multiply your weight in pounds by 705. Divide this number by your height in inches and divide this again by your height in inches. The number you will get will be somewhere in the 20s unless

you're extremely over or underweight. The higher your BMI, the higher the risk. The lowest death rates are for people with BMIs of 27 or lower.

Some say a BMI of 25 or lower for those under 35 and 27 for those over 35. However, this implies that it is OK to gain weight as we age, which is not necessarily healthy.

The idea that obesity is linked to illness was confirmed in 1959 when Metropolitan Life Insurance Co. of Chicago published the "Metropolitan Life Standards" on its baseline weight table. The company concluded that the fatter the person, the more likely that person will die prematurely.

Today, the generally accepted standard for appropriate weight is the 1983 Metropolitan Life Table, which allows for more weight gain than the standards of 1959. However, research shows that the lowest mortality rates are found in the 1959 table with the lower body weights.

Body fat distribution concentrated in your abdominal region, the so called "apple shape" is associated with higher risks of heart disease and diabetes and is worse for you than "pear" shaped fat concentration. No matter what your fat pattern distribution, excess body weight is unhealthy.

Analyzing the situation

Looking at various methods of weight loss and weight control can be as confusing and intimidating as setting up a financial plan. But, because obesity is a major epidemic and contributes to alarming health risks, it is worthwhile to take an "academic" approach to weight management.

Consider the following:

■ There are many weight-loss programs. From do-it-yourself books and work site programs, to

commercially franchised programs to licensed professionals. No matter which program you chose, you should have a good understanding of the program components and what to expect from any maintenance phase.

Exercise the program with regard to its approaches to diet, exercise, behavior modification and use of drugs or surgery as treatment. Decide whether the time is right for you to devote your attention and effort to succeed.

■ Drug therapy, if used, must be continued long term to work. However, many drugs have side effects that some people are not willing to endure. Drugs should only be used with people who are medically at risk for other health programs.

■ Focus your efforts on weight management, and not just weight loss. If weight management is the goal, then good health will be achieved.

■ Some of the best predictors of success at weight loss or weight maintenance include:

- High initial body weight
- Regular and consistent loss early in the program
- Having positive social support
- Having a positive, problem solving attitude toward life's stresses
- Engaging in regular physical activity
- Regular eating patterns with control of calories
- Ongoing self-monitoring (of intake, weight, etc.) and other behavior modification techniques
- Confidence that you can achieve a goal

Time for a lifestyle checkup

Benjamin Franklin was right when he said - "To lengthen thy life, lessen thy meals." It is a simple truth but something that is much easier said than done. As the new year gets under way, many of us make resolutions.

We will eat healthier, lose weight, spend less money, devote more time to family and friends, take time to relax, etc. I suggest

that instead of making resolutions that are difficult if not impossible to keep, we should strive to make lifestyle changes that will benefit us this year, and throughout our lives.

If we are overweight, it is time to change our eating habits. Sometimes that means making lifestyle changes that affect not only our food intake but the way we spend our time and money as well.

Joe Sarafin, president of the Associated Food Dealers of Michigan, has some simple suggestions that may inspire you. And, as you might expect, they all begin at the supermarket.

■ Eat healthier and lose weight - Sarafin says it's time to eat more meals at home. He's right, it is easier to eat correctly when you prepare the food yourself. After all, when was the last time you saw a grapefruit on the menu at a fast food drive-in window? If you or anyone in your family falls into the danger zone on the BMI test, then weight loss should be a priority. Eating at home, or at least preparing your meals at home and packing them (for school or work) can help. When we make our own sandwiches, salads and main courses we take charge of what we eat.

■ Devote more time to family - Adding structure to our chaotic lives is a priority of many people. Planning and making meals together with other family members can help. Sarafin suggests getting everyone involved. Include children in menu selection; ask them to find interesting recipes in magazines and cookbooks; let everyone into the kitchen during meal preparation time. Teaching children about good nutrition with hands-on kitchen experience will set them up for a lifetime of healthy eating habits.

■ Spend less money - If you eat less, you will probably spend less money. However, I suggest you take this a step further. Look at

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'Cuddle' foods comfort, warm on cold nights

MAIN DISH MIRACLE



MURIEL WAGNER

When the thermometer sinks below freezing, my food fantasies turn to all the "cuddle" foods - soup, stews and chilies. These are foods that warm the long, cold nights and seem to add sunshine to cloudy winter days. My patients always ask how to prepare these one-dish meals. The "Eating Younger" way.

I picked this recipe to share with you because of its flavor, nutrition values and freezer friendliness. It's an adaptation of a Julia Child recipe. Need I say more about the taste?

I reduced the fat and saturated fat by substituting a well-trimmed cut of top round of beef for the chuck cut in the original. I'm sure you know that those fatty streaks in the meat muscle, known as "marbling," determine tenderness. The more streaks, the moister and more tender the cut, but also the higher the fat. To overcome the lack of fat, this lean cut of meat is cooked for a long time in wine and broth which will

act as both tenderizer and flavor enhancer. (I cut up my own meat for stew because I like to serve recognizable meat pieces. When I use the ready-cut stew beef, it seems to disintegrate into unrecognizable shreds.)

Stew has other health advantages. The delicious gravy in this recipe makes the recommended 3-ounce portion seem much larger, especially if it's served with a pilaf - like the accompanying Barley Pilaf. Did you know that barley has more soluble fiber than almost any other grain? There's a quick-cooking variety that makes it easier to prepare than rice or potatoes. The barley is cooked in broth so that you don't need fat for flavor and the sliced water chestnuts add the crunch of nuts without the fat.

In the original recipe you discarded the vegetables after they were cooked. I found that pureeing them and adding them back to the cooking liquid added additional flavor, not to mention nutrition values.

The Red Zinfandel wine imparts a distinct flavor to the recipe. This is a fruity red wine, not too expensive. It's worth a trip to a specialty store if it's not available at your regular market. If

wine isn't part of your diet, substitute more of the beef broth with a dash of apple juice.

This recipe is one of my favorite company dishes. While it takes a long time to cook initially, I can arrange to cook it at my leisure and freeze it. It's a snap to defrost and prepare the seasonings for the gravy. It makes a perfect company main dish because you can keep it on a simmer almost forever. What a super dish for a Super Bowl party.

BEEF ZINFANDEL

4 pounds boneless round steak, 1-1/2 inch thick

Cooking oil
3 cups low-sodium beef broth
2 cups sliced onions
2/3 cup sliced carrots
16 ounce can whole plum tomatoes
3 cups Red Zinfandel wine
1 teaspoon thyme
Cornstarch (1 tablespoon of cornstarch per cup of cooking liquid)
2 large heads of garlic
1/2 cup white wine of your choice
1/2 cup low-sodium beef broth



Trim beef of remaining fat. Cut beef into 1-1/2-inch by 2-inch cubes. Dry thoroughly. Coat a skillet with an oiled paper towel. Brown meat on all sides, adding beef broth to prevent sticking. Remove meat to a 4-quart casserole dish. Add onions and carrots to skillet and brown lightly. Add to meat. Cover beef with tomatoes, red wine, bouillon and thyme. Bring to a slow simmer on top of stove or in oven at 325 degrees F. for 1-2 hours until fork tender, basting the meat. Pour contents, except for meat, into a colander set over a sauce pan. Press juices out of vegetables. Puree the remains in a blender or processor. Add puree to juices. Add to rest of the cooking liquid and cook until slightly thickened. Pour over the beef. Stew may be frozen at this point.

To flavor the gravy: Separate and

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