

Prepare Low Carb Meals

By Curt Hagedorn

It seems everyone is jumping on the low carb diet bandwagon and, though there may be varying opinions of the different diet plans vying for your attention from Atkins to Palm Beach, cutting down on carbohydrates (and their partner in crime, sugars) may be just the thing you need to develop a healthier overall eating lifestyle. Remember two things – first, that you can substantially cut down on both carbohydrates and sugars if you cut out snack and processed foods from your life – basically everything your active ten year old seems to be able to eat with impunity, you must cross off your favorites list forever – that includes salty snacks and sweets of all variety from sugary breakfast cereals to cookies, cakes and candy in all of their tempting profusion. And if you're not going to be eating them, why get your ten-year old (or five year old) started? Ban them from the family menu for the good of all.

Second, there's no substitute for plain old calorie counting. You may lose weight if you almost completely edit carbs from your life, but the odds are against any drastic diet having major results that stick. So if you've just decided to randomly cut out carbohydrates, don't expect much progress. Most low-carb diets are based first on a sort of "carbohydrate fast" where you eat absolutely no carbohydrates and thus, they say, retrain your body to begin using your stored fat for nutrition. This can take anywhere from a week to a month and is often accompanied by a sort of "crash" – feeling tired, weak, etc. as your body readjusts to not being constantly pumped with unnecessary fuel. Once this occurs, most diets let you gradually add "good" carbohydrates – whole grains, beans, etc. – in combination with proteins, as well as more fruits and vegetables containing natural sugars and carbs.

That being said, you can cut carbs out of your life in a variety of ways. The most obvious, finding substitutes for "food carriers," the bread and pasta and chips and crackers we use as delivery systems for lower carb or no carb foods. Eggs, particularly egg whites, are great food carriers...just about anything you can put on a pizza you can put on an omelet and if you can't bear all those whites, leave in a yolk or two...six eggs have around 600 calories, 6 egg whites and two yolks have somewhat over 200 calories depending on the size of the eggs (and of course, 2/3 less fat, carbohydrate, etc.) Spaghetti Squash has around 5 grams of carbohydrate, real spaghetti, about 21 grams per serving. Anything you can put on a cracker you can load onto a spear of romaine lettuce or celery or wedge of carrot, or scoop into a cup of iceberg. Vegetables don't have to be constantly paired on a crudite tray with a bowl of sour cream dip, try slicing zucchini, spreading them on a plate and topping them like nachos – low carb and just as good as those corn chips. If you mix these elements up in your meal planning, you'll find you never get the "egg boredom" that sets in with so many low carb dieters. Even meats, though high

in fat, can substitute for crackers or bread – if you put the pepperoni on the bottom and leave off the crust it still tastes a lot like pizza.

Also, avail yourself of all the tools at your disposal to make things tastier...if you have an indoor grille on your counter you can always sizzle up something quick to satisfy a craving without reaching for the cracker or cookie box. Slice a fresh pineapple (or drain rings from a can) and grille for great dessert – especially topped with a scoop of one of the great new varieties of sugar free, low carb ice cream or frozen yogurt. Make sure your blender is always available for a low carb smoothie, and your crock-pot is clean and ready to make less expensive cuts of meat into succulent meals that will satisfy everyone. An iced tea maker can, with some of the new sweeteners, make delicious herb and fruit flavored teas in mere minutes that have no carbs and all the refreshment of fruit juice or soft drinks.

Copyright © 2005 Publishers-Edge

