

## Robert's Story – Flavor Hounds

It was an interesting departure from the usual business one night at Suppers when we were reading about how people develop the taste for particular foods. The conclusion was that food scientists had it all figured out and that it related to designing combinations of ingredients that change how people feel. Each one of us could name a favorite fruit and a few vegetables we enjoy, but the foods that we used to feel less lonely or give us a boost of energy were all manufactured foods. We all had health problems related to a weakness for sweet, creamy and starchy comfort foods. The diagnoses that brought us all together at Suppers were varied: depression, low blood sugar, high blood sugar and anxiety. And one was there primarily to learn how to feed a chronically constipated child with asthma. He had no interest in meals, just snack foods. We were health relatives, people who are related to one another by virtue of requiring similar solutions to different problems. In our collective "natural reality", it didn't matter that our diagnoses were different, we were all there to solve the same real problem: how to develop a taste for whole foods that would reverse our diet-related illnesses.

We thought we'd make up recipes subtracting the worst processed ingredients and emphasizing the other attributes of appealing foods, like varying texture and flavors. None of us is a trained chef and there was nothing was getting in the way of trying just about anything. We were doing this in November so we had lots of squash, onions and apples to work with. We wanted a robust, autumny soup, and we decided to roast instead of boiling the squash. We wanted something smooth and something crunchy, so we blenderized some of the squash to make the soup creamy and roasted some pecans with nutmeg for garnish.

Most of us were meat eaters, but there was one vegetarian. So we topped her soup with roasted cauliflower and everyone else's with a couple of slices of roasted chicken.

The soup was delicious. We decided to spend the next few weeks looking for recipes or developing our own ideas of how to make food that tastes good without a lot of sugar, fat, starch or salt. We made sure to have lemons and limes on hand, nuts to roast, and sprouts for a healthy crunch. We made sure the vegetarian soups had a big variety of vegetables and at least one kind of legume. We became connoisseurs of hot sauce, vinegars and mustards, inexpensive ingredients that packed a lot of flavor.

At Suppers we talk about the importance of developing a spirit of creativity. For our group that manifested as cooking with the goal of addressing our diagnoses, which were different, and our challenge, which was the same: learning to love whole food.