

Stuart and Mom

"The lamb meatloaf I brought home from Suppers was a big hit." How nice to write something positive in my journal for a change about my family's dining experiences. It has been a long and slow process inching my family in the direction of better eating habits, a goal I set for myself in the Suppers Program.

I have been involved with Suppers for about two years. Initially, both my younger teenage son, Stuart, and my husband were skeptical about the consequences to them of my learning how to prepare more healthy, whole foods that helped me manage my diabetes, my weight and my menopausal mood swings. However, over time, both of them have become *much* more open to trying new things and liking them! I've noticed that there seems to be some psychological advantage when I use a recipe that has come from an "expert" in a "cooking class" as opposed to something "mom concocted on her own." If they know it came from Suppers, they are more likely to think it's valid.

Here's another entry from my journal... "This morning as I was fixing breakfast, I discovered that we were out of bagels (Stuart's favorite breakfast). I almost fell over when he asked for the leftover coconut milk soup instead! It had fish and tofu in it last night and it still had fish and tofu in it this morning, and still he asked for it! I must admit though, it was delicious, as most of the Suppers recipes usually are." I guess he's been absorbing some of the information I've been sharing with him while he rolls his eyes at me because he voluntarily added a cup of yoghurt, reasoning that he was having four tests that day and needed lots of brain energy. Later in the day he quizzed me, "But how come I got hungry at noon? I thought that soup was supposed to keep me full all day!" Well, yes, I thought, enjoying his new greed, you still have to eat every few hours.

Stuart, my pizza, pasta and bagel lover, has since switched on his own accord from white bread with peanut butter and jelly to whole wheat bread with peanut butter and sliced apples, and sometimes some 100% fruit spread. And I bought spelt bread, which he is starting to eat with soups. One night, neither my husband nor I were home to give him his dinner. But there was a big pot of Brunswick Stew in the frig from my cooking class (calling Suppers "cooking class" increases my chances he'll eat the food). When I got home, I noticed he'd eaten a very large bowl of it for dinner. If I could have, I would have done handsprings.

Fast forward a year: Rereading my journal, I can't believe how far we have come. For my birthday Stuart gave me a gift certificate (OK, I asked for it) to attend 4 Suppers for Teens meetings, after which he brought home dinner to serve the family each time. Grumbling, he went, but he came home proud to have the family dinner in hand. Cooking the family's dinner helped him take ownership of the foods he eats and expanded his interest in trying new foods, as long as he understood something about them and how they were made.

Now at age 16, he drinks a smoothie every morning for breakfast. It has 1 – 2 cups of frozen strawberries and blueberries, 1 banana, 1 cup of Greek yoghurt (17 grams of protein), 1 tablespoon of liquid fish oil, lemon flavored, 1 scoop of vanilla whey protein powder (16 grams protein), orange juice, acai juice, and 1/2 teaspoon of stevia. I add assorted other things that may be around such as half an avocado, a cucumber, a scoop of peanut butter, left over sweet potatoes or winter squash, but he gets suspicious if it turns green! I would love to throw in some kale, but have discovered the hard way that that is pushing a good thing a bit too far.

Along with his smoothie in the morning, Stuart also eats a slice of hemp bread or half a hemp bagel with some cream cheese. Each bread slice has 6 grams of protein, 2.5 grams of fiber, and 12 grams of carbohydrate. Half of this amazing bagel has 8 grams of protein,

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6 grams of fiber and 17 grams of carbs. (For reference: half of a regular plain bagel has 5 grams of protein, 1 gram of fiber, and a whopping 30 carbs!) The hemp bagel that I found in the freezer section of my local health food store is very dark brown with lots of sesame and poppy seeds on the outside and he loves it. No longer is there any discussion over the fact that the bread is dark brown. Progress!

Now that Stuart has experienced for himself the beneficial effects of eating a substantial breakfast, I get no arguments. It's a bit more expensive to be feeding my family these highly nutritious foods, but the payoff is huge. He even now scoops up a small handful of supplements every day with no fuss, Omega 3 fatty acids, a multi, and some Vitamin C and D.

The 50-year husband is another matter, but there has been progress on that front too. He is one of those people who can do addition but not subtraction, we learned about them at meetings. My husband recognizes three food groups: pasta, pizza, and bagels. The good news is that he will always at least try the Suppers food and he has switched to eating whole grain, high protein pasta. This is not exactly what I hoped would have happened, but I have to remind myself that it *is* a good example of nutritional harm reduction. While the pasta has not gone away, he now willingly will also eat more nutrient dense starches such as quinoa, brown rice, sweet potatoes and winter squash.

My other son (age 20) is much easier. Yesterday, he had leftover Thai coconut milk soup for breakfast, and this morning he helped himself to leftover roasted spaghetti squash with 2 fried eggs. Honestly, what more could a mother ask for?

Thanks to what my family has learned from Suppers, breakfast and most other meals no longer consist of food fights with me trying to get them to eat healthier foods while they stick in their heels. The key for me was to learn *how* to make healthy food taste better. Everyone is now more open to new foods as long as they taste good, no wonder. If you had told me two years ago how far this family would come, I never would have believed it. And now, I am facilitating Suppers meetings and pressing jars of leftover coconut milk soup into the hands of new members as they head home. "Just keep it in front of them," I say, "You'll never know until you try. Oh, and this came from 'cooking class!' "