

the new american plate

cookbook



Recipes for a Healthy Weight and a Healthy Life



introduction

proportion and portion size

Start by looking at your plate. If you are like most Americans, it holds three items: a piece of red meat, poultry, or possibly fish; a sizeable helping of potato or white rice; and a small serving of some green vegetable—most often peas or green beans. The portion of meat is so large—usually 6 to 8 ounces—that it crowds everything else to the side. Notice that the colors are brown and white with just a touch of green.

That is the traditional American plate. It was shaped by food-industry marketers and government agencies during the mid-twentieth century, and we have grown accustomed to it. It is a comforting sight—although admittedly a little drab to the eye and bland to the taste. Unfortunately, that lack of appeal is a telltale sign. As research in nutrition has advanced, it has become apparent that there is a lot wrong with this plate. There is too much animal protein—and the saturated fat that comes with it—and too little plant food. As a result, this plate delivers too many calories, too much fat, and far too few of the nutrients and nutrient-like substances that keep us healthy in the long term.

In other words, the proportion of foods on the plate is all wrong. Consistent and convincing scientific evidence suggests that for preventing both overweight and chronic disease a predominantly plant-based diet is best. This conclusion doesn't mean you have to become a vegetarian, unless other reasons prompt you to do so. It simply means shifting the proportion of food on your plate so that vegetables, fruits, whole grains, and beans take up most of the room and the portion of meat is reduced

considerably in size and importance. A good rule of thumb—one we will come back to often—is that your plate should hold two-thirds (or more) vegetables, fruits, whole grains, and beans and one-third (or less) animal protein.

That is the New American Plate. Unlike the traditional plate, it is full of color and variety. Where the traditional plate held three items, the New American Plate often holds four: two vegetable dishes, one whole grain dish, and one 3-ounce serving of meat. You can choose a medley of several vegetables or a single vegetable enhanced by bits of other vegetables, fruits, or nuts. The whole grain may be seasoned with fresh herbs, and the meat served with a salsa or fruit sauce. The variety and combination of plant foods and plant-based condiments create the delightful flavors, aromas, and textures that mean healthy eating.

The team of cooks, nutritionists, scientists, and food writers who created this cookbook is not advocating a radical break with the past. Their concept of menu planning is certainly less radical than most popular diets, which require you to eliminate whole categories of food for long periods of time. The cookbook team merely recommends that you adjust the proportion of plant food on your plate, which may mean utilizing more plant foods and adding a fourth item where you are accustomed to seeing three.

Nor does the cookbook team urge a radical break when it comes to cooking the New American Plate. Most of the techniques the team suggests are familiar. You probably already use lowfat ingredients and

vegetable oils such as olive and canola oil. You may also cook with whole grains and sweeten with fruit. For those of you who do not, this cookbook provides a gentle introduction to these practices. What may seem most novel is the emphasis on creative preparations of vegetables and whole grains. You are asked to infuse such dishes with the same excitement Americans have traditionally reserved for roasted and grilled meats. *The New American Plate Cookbook* is really all about cooking with vegetables, fruits, whole grains, and beans in novel ways that delight the palate and make for a longer healthy life.

Why Plant Foods?

During the past twenty years, scientists have done an extraordinary amount of research on the effects of diet on chronic diseases such as cancer, stroke, and heart disease. There are numerous ways to study this connection. Observational studies, for example, compare eating patterns and instances of disease among large groups, even whole populations. Laboratory studies explore how certain substances in food affect the development of disease. And clinical studies attempt to test whether these substances administered in specified dosages do have the predicted effect.

One of the major activities of the American Institute for Cancer Research is interpreting the thousands of studies regarding the relationship of diet to cancer. The scientists involved in the project review the total body of research. A unique study, no matter how widely publicized, does not in itself convince them. They look for studies that have achieved significant results, that have been duplicated, and that confirm each other. More specifically, they look for repeated confirmation of an association in all three kinds of studies discussed above. Only when this level of convincing evidence is found do they conclude that the preponderance of the research indicates a link between a nutrient, food, or dietary pattern and lower cancer risk. (See “The Science behind the New American Plate,” page 286.)

For at least a decade, the evidence has indicated that a diet rich in vegetables and fruits reduces cancer risk. Based on this evidence, most scientists are willing to state that a largely plant-based diet, combined with regular physical exercise, can reduce the likelihood of developing cancer by 30 to 40 percent.

This conclusion is fortunate for two reasons. First, it coincides with findings in regard to stroke, heart disease, and many other diseases that affect us as we age. Current research strongly suggests that prevention of most chronic diseases involves regularly eating meals that are high in vegetables and fruits and low in animal fat, salt, and added sugar. Second, such a dietary pattern can help prevent overweight and obesity, and, when combined with portion control and exercise, can aid weight loss. The predominance of plant foods on the plate seems to be central to managing many of the health problems that concern us most.

Just how plant foods help reduce cancer risk is the focus of much of the research that AICR funds. Clearly, the minerals, vitamins, and fiber so abundant in vegetables and fruits are instrumental. But today there is even greater interest in the role played by phytochemicals, those fascinating compounds found only in plants. Many scientists believe that what we are learning about phytochemicals in the twenty-first century will have an even greater effect on human health than discoveries made about vitamins in the last century.

Of the thousands of phytochemicals that have been identified, approximately 150 have been studied so far. For instance, the carotenoids are antioxidants, which subdue free radicals that damage our DNA. Included in this family are lycopene, found in tomatoes, pink grapefruit, and watermelon, and lutein, prevalent in leafy vegetables such as spinach and collard greens. Another powerful family of phytochemicals is the flavonoids, which decrease inflammation and impede the growth of cancer cells. One subcategory of flavonoids, the anthocyanins, is present in strawberries, raspberries, and

cranberries, and another, quercetin, is abundant in apples, pears, and green tea. Saponins, to mention one last category of phytochemical, are found in whole grains and beans. They help control cholesterol, triglycerides, and blood sugar levels and may prevent the proliferation of cancer cells.

Besides boosting the body's own defenses against disease, phytochemicals seem to be the source of the characteristic colors, textures, smells, and tastes of fruits and vegetables. Lycopene, for instance, is famous for making tomatoes red and watermelon pink. Allyl sulfide compounds give garlic its unique flavor and aroma. It is likely that these colors, tastes, and smells originally attracted our ancestors to the fruits and vegetables containing the compounds that benefit us. The sensuous properties of plant foods and their nutritional value come together in a remarkably functional way.

But there is a limit to the wonders of phytochemicals. Observational studies have identified phytochemicals that are likely to protect people against disease. Laboratory studies have explained how they might work. But clinical studies designed to show that large doses of individual phytochemicals produce miraculous effects have not been uniformly successful. These inconsistent results disturb people who are seeking one substance that will cure all. It is unlikely that science will ever find that substance for them. As research progresses, it is becoming increasingly evident that phytochemicals, vitamins, and minerals interact within the body. In fact, they enhance each other's activity. Together, they create a greater effect than the sum of their individual benefits.

This interaction among phytochemicals means the shape of your whole diet is far more important to your well-being than any one substance or food. Taking large doses of lycopene supplements or deodorized garlic tablets may not hurt you. Loading up on tomato soup seasoned with garlic may even help you. But the greatest health benefits derive from eating different vegetables and fruits at each

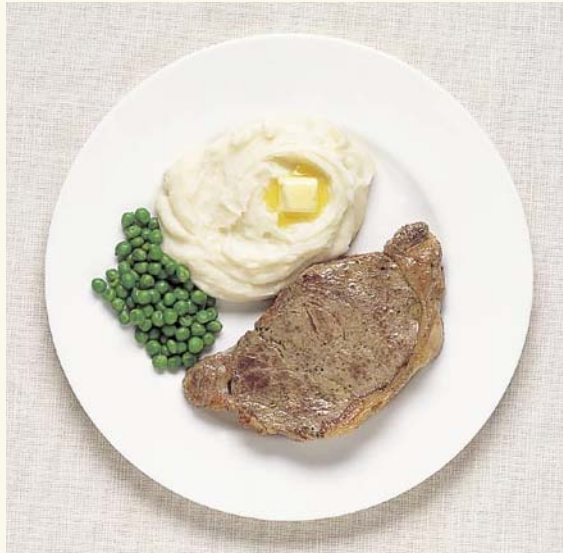
meal and dining each week on salads, stews, casseroles, and other dishes that bring a variety of plant foods into various combinations. The evidence indicates that to strengthen the body's own defenses against the diseases that come with age, we need to eat the greatest possible variety of vegetables and fruits.

All this focus on plant foods tends to crowd meat to the side of the plate. That is ultimately a good thing. Considerable evidence suggests that red meat increases cancer risk. Grilling any kind of meat may add to that risk. Furthermore, beef, lamb, pork, and to a lesser degree poultry bring with them saturated fat, which is linked to cancer, heart disease, and stroke. Other concerns about animal protein—questions about hormones, antibiotics, and *E. coli* bacteria, to name just a few—remain unresolved. Current knowledge about cancer risk prompts many scientists to recommend limiting portions of red meat to 3 ounces—a guideline that can be extended to any kind of meat, poultry, or fish. Thus, heaping your plate with plant foods will accomplish two ends: it will fill you full with health-protective substances and crowd out foods with less salutary effects.

The weight of the scientific evidence suggests that we should reverse the proportions on the traditional American plate and think of plant foods as our mainstay and meat as a side dish or a condiment that adds flavor. There is no need to count calories, weigh portions, or memorize lists of phytochemicals, minerals, or vitamins and their sources. Just look at the food on your plate. Is it two-thirds (or more) vegetables, fruits, whole grains, and beans, and one-third (or less) animal protein? Does it have this proportion more often than not? If so, the shape of your diet bodes well for a long, healthy life.

Preparing the New American Plate

Your transition to the New American Plate should be gradual. Abrupt changes in diet are usually short-lived. Make changes slowly and get used to them before making further adjustments. Remember



A traditional American plate



A transitional plate

that traditional American plate—potato, peas, and 8 ounces of steak? On the first day of your transition prepare a larger portion of a more interesting vegetable. For instance, you might try Zucchini and Yellow Squash with Herbes de Provence (page 42). The flavor of the two kinds of squash enhanced by tomatoes and enriched by cheese should provoke considerable interest. If you usually have a baked potato, switch to a sweet potato flavored with a little olive oil. Since there won't be much room left for the meat, reduce the portion size to 5 ounces.

This is a good transitional plate. In succeeding days, try some of the other vegetable recipes in this book and serve yourself larger portions. Heap them high on your plate, and continue to reduce the size of your portion of meat. Red, orange, yellow, and green should stand out on your plate, indicating an abundance of protective plant substances. You will also be taking in less animal fat and more healthful plant oils. Although you have just begun the transition, you are already gaining considerable health benefits.

You may never go any further than this transitional plate. That's fine. Your health will profit from the changes you have made. But for most people, a week or two of such fare will hone the appetite for even greater variety. The next step is preparing two vegetable dishes for each meal. Select recipes that vary in both appearance and taste. For instance, a helping of Snow Peas with Cashews (page 34) offers the fragrant scent of toasted orange zest and the crunch of peas and nuts. Tricolored Peppers with Fresh Herbs (page 37) will complement the snow peas nicely. The classic combination of oregano and thyme enlivens the peppers, and the balsamic vinegar adds a little zing. Instead of the usual potatoes, why not choose a whole grain? A simple dish like Brown Rice with Scallions and Fresh Herbs (page 72) can be put on to cook while you concentrate on the vegetables.

These three intriguing new recipes will take up as much space in the imagination as on the plate. Why

fuss over the meat? Is there some leftover turkey in the refrigerator? If not, defrost a turkey cutlet. Four ounces raw will cook down to a 3-ounce serving. Sauté the meat in olive oil and add it to the colorful abundance on your plate.

You have just prepared a fine example of the New American Plate. Vegetables, whole grains, herbs, and nuts make up a delicious two-thirds or more of your plate. Some lean meat makes up the other third. The colors, aromas, and tastes are engaging, and the yield of health-protective substances is prodigious.

To prepare for days when you have less time to make a meal, consider cooking once to eat twice. That is, double one or two of these recipes and refrigerate or freeze half to enjoy another day. One way to make the New American Plate practical is to keep both a prepared vegetable dish and a fresh vegetable (like green beans, broccoli, or zucchini) in the refrigerator. Just warm the former in the microwave and steam the latter and drizzle it with lemon juice—and in no time, half your meal is ready.

Another way to facilitate preparation of the New American Plate is to cook one of the many one-pot meals included in this cookbook. Although it may take a little longer to prepare some of these dishes, many cooks find it easier to concentrate on a single dish than to prepare several simultaneously. What's more, these one-pot meals are delicious. They have the complex flavor of vegetables, whole grains, herbs, spices, often beans, and even fruits that have been simmered together. Most of them have been “seasoned” with a small amount of meat, poultry, or fish. Each dish embodies the two-thirds plant food to one-third animal protein ratio that promotes health.

For instance, try Sweet Potato and Apple Stew with Turkey and Cranberries (page 138). This multicolored stew blends different levels of sweetness (from carrots, apples, sweet potato, and rutabaga) with the tart edge of cranberries and the pungency of thyme and black pepper. It also contains a range of textures, from the softness of cooked potato and the chewy-



The New American Plate



Another version of the New American Plate



The New American Plate holds two-thirds (or more) vegetables, fruits, whole grains, and beans and one-third (or less) animal protein.

ness of turkey to the crunch of celery, onions, and almonds. A spoonful of the finished product is a rich sensory experience: the aroma, taste, and mouthfeel are complex and completely engaging. Served with Heirloom Whole Wheat Bread (page 288) and a small salad, it is a perfect meal, offering an abundance of good taste and an array of healthful substances.

Some members of the cookbook team felt strongly that one-pot meals are the ultimate New American Plate—foods in the right proportion blended to produce an enticing meal. They argued that these meals would facilitate the transition to healthier eating. People enjoying their complex flavors would not notice the reduction in animal protein.

Other team members felt just as strongly that there

is lingering prejudice against casseroles, stews, and chilis in America. During the last century, one-pot meals were too often concocted with leftovers and other ingredients that the cook wanted to disguise. Many of us still think of casseroles as yesterday's chicken, noodles, and canned mushroom soup baked bone dry in the oven. In many American homes, when guests arrive, the host serves meat, potatoes, and a vegetable, certainly not a casserole, chili, or stew.

So the cookbook team decided to offer the meal with two vegetables, a whole grain, and a little meat as the prototypical New American Plate. These updated one-pot meals are offered as another option. In effect, the team decided to suggest two models for a healthy meal and let you choose whether

to use one, the other, or, quite sensibly, both. Whatever you decide, you will be involved in preparing meals that get the proportions right while filling your plate with spectacular food.

Thinking about Portion Size

Once you feel comfortable with the question of proportion, it's time to think about portion size. A nutritional analysis is included with each recipe in this book. (The methodology is explained on page 292.) The most important piece of information in each analysis comes first—the number of servings the recipe yields. If you are accustomed to American fare, that number may seem high to you, which means, of course, the serving size will seem small. The yield ascribed to each recipe relates not to current consumption patterns, but to the U.S. Department of Agriculture's standard serving sizes. The cookbook team considered specifying larger, more typical serving sizes. That would have made things easier for everybody. But in light of the number of Americans who are overweight, not one person favored taking the easy way out.

Scientists and educators from Europe and Asia frequently visit AICR's offices. One of the first things they mention is the vast number of overweight people they have seen in the streets of our cities. The statistics verify their observations. Since 1980, there has been an 81 percent increase in the number of overweight adults in this country and a 174 percent increase in the number of obese adults. The latest figures indicate that two-thirds of our adult population is overweight or obese.

Another thing these foreign visitors never fail to mention is the enormous portions of food on our plates. Dining in our restaurants, fast-food outlets, and coffee shops, they marvel at the 12-inch plates heaped with food, the gigantic take-out bags bulging with 1,300-calorie lunches, the huge muffins, bagels, and cinnamon buns, and the 64-ounce sodas. During the past two decades, portions in commercial eateries in this country have doubled

and tripled in size, and Americans, who eat out an average of four times a week, seem to have lost their sense of appropriate portion size.

This process began slowly in the early eighties. Fast-food chains started competing for consumer dollars by offering larger portions. Since food in comparison to labor or rent is a chain's lowest cost, they were able to offer those larger portions for just a little more money. Avid for bargains, Americans began spending just a few cents more for all that extra food. Soon "value meals" and "supersizing" became standard practice. Value marketing was adapted to table-service restaurants, coffee shops, grocery stores, and convenience stores. The statistics indicate that after eating gigantic portions in commercial eateries for years, Americans are now serving them at home.

It is significant that both the people and the food portions they eat swelled at roughly the same time. It doesn't take a genius to see the connection. There are many factors that foster overweight and obesity in our culture, but two stand out as root causes: we eat too much and we exercise too little. If we want to rectify the situation, one of the first things we have to do is learn to eat smaller portions of food.

Evading the Issue

The majority of Americans resist the idea that you have to eat less in order to lose weight. In a recent AICR survey, 60 percent of the respondents said that, when you are trying to lose weight, the kind of food you eat is more important than the amount of food you eat. This kind of thinking can be traced back to one or more of the many fad diet books that have inundated the market during the last decade. These books promise that you can eat as much as you want and still lose weight. All you have to do is eliminate some demonized category of food from your diet.

We all have acquaintances who find such promises compelling. Five years ago, these people told us, "It's a cinch to lose weight. All you have to do is cut

out the fat.” They talked a lot about where to find the best bagel, pasta, and fat-free cookies. Today they obsess about bacon and eggs, tender steak, and cheeseburgers without the bun. “It’s no sweat losing weight,” they say. “All you have to do is cut out the carbs.”

Is there anything to this latest craze? In searching for the causes of our obesity epidemic, some scientists have looked beyond over-consumption. They theorize that foods high in refined carbohydrates (white bread, white rice, most ready-to-eat cereals) as well as white potatoes are too quickly digested and absorbed. That is, these foods cause a rapid and steep rise in your blood sugar level, which in turn causes a rapid and profuse secretion of insulin, the hormone that ushers the sugar into muscle and fat cells. As a result, your blood sugar level plummets as rapidly as it rose. You are left feeling weak and hungry long before your next scheduled meal. The immediate result of this rapid rise and fall of blood sugar levels is overeating. The long-term results, many scientists argue, are added fat storage and ultimately higher risk of chronic disease.

This thesis merits greater study. Eventually, research may confirm it. If so, the proper response would not be purging all “carbs” from the diet. It would make more sense to substitute foods containing unrefined carbohydrates for foods that seem to cause the problem.

In most cases this substitution is easily accomplished. The recipes in this cookbook, for instance, generally call for whole grains such as stone-ground whole wheat, brown rice, and kasha; dark-colored vegetables and fruits including sweet potatoes; and a variety of beans. These ingredients are preferred because of their vitamin, mineral, and phytochemical content, but they also supply carbohydrates that are digested more slowly and evenly. Eaten in reasonable amounts, these “carbs” can help you maintain a healthy weight.

In fact, questions about the effects of carbohydrates, fats, and proteins on weight loss are still in

dispute. Since we tend to eat these foods together and each affects the digestion of the others, it might be some time before these questions are sorted out. At this point in the research, there is only one certainty about diet and weight: if you take in less energy in the form of food than you expend in the form of physical activity, you will lose weight.

There is convincing scientific evidence that a predominantly plant-based diet will reduce the risk of chronic disease. The two-thirds to one-third ratio is a practical method of integrating sufficient plant foods into your diet to prolong your health. On the other hand, there is still scant evidence that you can lose weight permanently by eliminating categories of food and disrupting the healthy proportion of food on your plate. At this juncture, the best prescription for bolstering long-term health and achieving a gradual and permanent loss of weight is to maintain the two-thirds to one-third proportion and to reduce your portion sizes.

Reducing Portion Sizes

All of us, whether we’re concerned about weight loss or not, need to regain our sense of appropriate portion size. To that end we need some standard by which to measure the portions we are eating. Fortunately, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) has supplied just such a measure. It has maintained a set of standard serving sizes in connection with its food guide pyramid. This scale is based on the median serving size reported in data collected from 1982 through 1985—before value marketing succeeded in confounding the issue.

One glance at this chart makes it clear that the USDA’s standard servings are considerably smaller than what most people actually eat. Although restaurants frequently serve 8- to 12-ounce steaks, the standard serving of meat is 3 ounces. We regularly consume 3 or more cups of pasta; the standard serving is $\frac{1}{2}$ cup. We fill the breakfast bowl to the brim with dry cereal, but the standard serving is 1 ounce, which ranges between $\frac{1}{4}$ and $1\frac{1}{4}$ cups in

STANDARD SERVING SIZES FOR AN AVERAGE ADULT

Source: U.S. Department of Agriculture

Food	Serving	Looks like
Chopped vegetables	½ cup	½ baseball or rounded handful
Raw leafy vegetables (such as lettuce)	1 cup	1 baseball or fist
Fresh fruit	1 medium piece ½ cup chopped	1 baseball ½ baseball or rounded handful
Dried fruit	¼ cup	1 golf ball or scant handful
Pasta, rice, cooked cereal	½ cup	½ baseball or rounded handful
Ready-to-eat cereal	1 ounce, which varies from ¼ cup to 1¼ cups (see label)	—
Meat, poultry, seafood	3 ounces (boneless cooked weight from 4 ounces raw)	Deck of cards
Dried beans	½ cup cooked	½ baseball or rounded handful
Nuts	⅓ cup	Level handful
Cheese	1½ ounces (2 ounces if processed cheese)	1 ounce looks like four dice

volume. The disparity is shocking. Some of it can be explained away. Today, for better or worse, we eat pasta as an entrée. The standard serving size relates to a side dish. But, in general, the disparity in size reflects how far we have strayed from the norm.

Try measuring your own regular portions by these standard serving sizes. At your next meal, serve yourself your customary portion of a favorite food. Examine it to see how much of the plate it covers. Next, place a standard serving of the same food on the same size plate. Look at the two plates and compare. Then ask yourself this question: how many standard servings go into the portion I regularly eat?

The next question is, of course, how many standard servings *should* go into the portion you ordi-

narily eat. Match your intake to your expenditure. If you jog three miles a day, do work requiring rigorous activity, or are pregnant, you may conclude that several servings are appropriate. If you usually sit while commuting, working, and relaxing in the evening, you might decide to reduce the number of servings.

Another way to answer this question is to consider your weight. Are you happy with what the scale says? Is your weight stable? If the answer is yes on both scores, then you are probably eating the right number of standard servings at each meal. If your weight is high and climbing, it may be time to reduce the number of standard servings that go into your regular portions.

Cut back gradually. You can afford to reduce your portion sizes by stages. Even small reductions have an effect. If you allow your body to get used to slightly smaller portions, hunger will not be a problem. You may find that avoiding that overstuffed feeling is satisfying in itself. If maintaining a healthy proportion of foods on your plate and gradually reducing portion size do not bring a slow, steady reduction in weight, don't reach for the latest fad diet book. Contact your doctor or a registered dietitian for an individualized plan.

“Makes Six Servings”

It should be obvious by now why the cookbook team decided to base serving sizes on USDA standards when describing the yield of the recipes in this book. Look at the recipe for Red Pepper, Tomato, and Chicken Pilaf (page 160). The nutritional analysis in the headnote indicates that this recipe makes 6 servings. On your plate, one serving will resemble a baseball in size. Let's say you add a standard 1-cup serving of Arugula Salad with Radicchio and Blue Cheese (page 52) and one slice of Heirloom Whole Wheat Bread (page 228). Your meal will have a healthy proportion of plant foods to animal protein, a great variety of vegetables and grains, and just fewer than 500 calories. If you aren't concerned

about your weight, you might even add a dish from the soup or dessert chapters.

But some people may find these portions much smaller than they are accustomed to eating. At a luncheon during our annual research conference several years ago, AICR introduced the New American Plate concept to 500 scientists. Before lunch was served, we gave a brief presentation about proportion and portion size. Then the waiters served each guest a plate with a 3-ounce piece of salmon. They also brought each table three bowls, one containing Gingered Carrots with Golden Raisins and Lemon (page 25), a second containing Green Beans with Tomatoes and Herbs (page 34), and the last containing Orange Rice Pilaf with Dried Fruit (page 72). The guests had to serve themselves the vegetables and rice, but there were no serving spoons on the table, only measuring cups. Oh, what hilarity there was in that hall as many people confronted for the first time just how much they were used to eating.

The next year at the conference luncheon, we brought back the serving spoons. After all, the attendees were our guests, and our society equates generous portions of food and drink with good hospitality. When the disastrous medical consequences of our national weight problem become evident, however, we may change our conception of caring behavior. Pressing guests or family members to eat more than they actually need might come to be seen as a hostile rather than a hospitable act. Until that time, however, you may have to do some quiet calculating before a dinner party. When preparing a dish from this cookbook, estimate how many servings each guest is likely to eat. Then, if appropriate, double the recipe to be sure you have enough.

But in your day-to-day life, you want delicious foods that contribute to your health and at the same time allow you to manage your weight. That is why serving sizes relating to USDA standard servings are given in this book. How many standard servings you choose to include in your portions may

vary during different phases of your life. Weight and health fluctuate. Whatever happens, it's empowering to know that you can prepare delicious meals that strengthen your defenses against chronic disease and serve them in portion sizes that will help you maintain a healthy weight.

Enjoying the New American Plate

The New American Plate is, first of all, a style of cooking. It is a set of assumptions about what ingredients you select, how you combine them, and what preparations you use. The members of the cookbook team kept these five rules in front of them while they developed and revised the recipes:

- Introduce or increase the amount of plant foods (vegetables, fruits, whole grains, beans, herbs, and spices) whenever you can.
- Use canola and olive oil instead of animal fats. Keep the fat content of each dish below 30 percent of calories.
- Avoid refined sugar and refined grains whenever you can. Use whole grains and whole wheat flour.
- Avoid added salt.
- Mentally divide finished dishes into serving sizes consistent with USDA standards. Then adjust portion size to your needs.

These guidelines derive from science-based recommendations for reducing the risk of chronic disease. But you don't have to worry about their origin or even try to remember them. After cooking several of the recipes in this book, they will become part of your own cooking style.

After a while, you may begin to create your own recipes in this style or revamp old favorites. For instance, how about meat loaf made with ground turkey breast mixed with whole wheat bread crumbs, shredded carrots, chopped red peppers, and onion bits? You could update macaroni and cheese by using nonfat milk, a smaller amount of extra-sharp

cheddar cheese, and diced peppers and onions. Or think about making apple pie using sweet apples, a lot less sugar, and the New American Plate Pie Crust (page 243). Variations on traditional recipes are endless once you get into the swing of things.

If you cook this way regularly, the New American Plate will soon become your style of eating. Your table will never look the same. You'll be dining on a larger number of smaller dishes with stronger flavors. And you'll enjoy combinations of fruits and vegetables you never encountered before. Imagine Orange and Sesame Stir-Fry with Bow Tie Pasta (page 152), Spinach, Romaine, and Strawberries with Balsamic Vinaigrette (page 52), Whole Wheat Bread with Herbs (page 226), and a plate of fresh figs for dessert. Such a meal may sound exotic now, but it will make your mouth water once you start cooking the New American Plate.

That doesn't mean you'll never again eat the foods

that used to excite you. In a memorable scene from Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night*, some servants are feasting and drinking in the courtyard of a manor house. When the chief servant scolds them for their noisy carousing, one of the characters replies, "Dost thou think because thou art virtuous there shall be no more cakes and ale?" Shakespeare recognized the strengths and weaknesses of the human will. What we try to do always, we soon stop doing altogether. What we learn to do usually, we persist in doing, and that's what has an impact on our long-term health. Your goal should be to move gradually toward cooking and eating the proportions and portion sizes suggested in this book. When this style of cooking and eating becomes your general tendency, by all means treat yourself to some cakes and ale from time to time.

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