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Making Ethnic Foods Safer

By Dr. Donald A. Miller

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One of the wonders of the modern world is that we can enjoy foods from other places and times. Books, magazines, TV shows, internet searches, community cultural events, as well as ethnic restaurants are marvelous sources of food delights.

There is only one problem with this: Many ethnic foods have their roots in ages when both mechanization and wealth were less common. Foods that meant survival to our ancestors can lead to early death for ourselves. Even dietary laws which were based on the protection of health can now cause health problems. Longer life expectancies made this discovery possible.

But curiosity and willingness to experiment can create good modifications to great recipes.

Consider these examples of outmoded concepts.

One of my nephews was training as a French Chef. He was taught that "Fat is Flavor."

Salt, once needed as a preservative, is at dangerously high levels in snack foods, canned and frozen prepared foods, and many traditional foods.

White bread and rice were favored by the wealthy as signs of their wealth. As a consequence, whole grained foods almost vanished from "modern" diets for numerous decades.

Sweetness, alcohol, and over eating became associated with celebrations and luxury, especially in eras and areas when / where hunger was more common. As a consequence, more than half of us consume too much of refined sugars, alcohol, and foods.

Spices and herbs, originally added to foods that were not edible otherwise (especially before refrigeration), are to be found in ordinary grocery stores, but far too many are packed with totally unneeded salt. In fact, wise use of spices can produce flavorful foods that are low in salt.

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If you are getting enough calories every day, there is no reason that you cannot reduce the fat, salt, sugars, and alcohol in your diet and still enjoy what you eat. Even athletes and laborers, who need lots of calories, can get them from unrefined carbohydrates instead of saturated fats and refined sweeteners. Essential fatty acids can be found in plant foods and fish, as well as four legged meats.

And wise up. "Low carb" is "high dumb".

By the way, the search for good flavor has led to the wide spread use of synthesized Mono Sodium Glutamate, MSG. Various government agencies of various countries assure us that MSG is entirely safe, but enough of us get headaches, agitation, and dizzy or spacey feelings to know that just ain't true. Good chefs do not require MSG.

So, what can we do about it?

- * For the ethnic foods you already enjoy, go through the ingredients and make substitutions and deletions.
- * For new experiences, look more to Oriental and Asiatic recipes than to "farmer" or "noble" foods from France or Germany. But leave out the sugar which was added by missionaries in China, Japan, India, and more. For that matter, leave sugar out of Italian recipes and others.
- * Realize that traditional soy foods can provide all the essentials found in meats, without one having to declare one's self a vegetarian. (But add high calcium foods if you cut back on dairy and meats.)
- * Learn that fruits, or fruits with nuts, can taste very sweet, yet provide fiber, minerals, vitamins which are totally absent from man made sweeteners.
- * Avoid deep fried foods. Learn to use non-stick cook ware and sprays, pressure cookers, microwave ovens, crock pots, et cetera.
- * Instead of butter, use newer spreads that contain no hydrogenated oils. For sour cream, use non fat yogurt or a rich blend of non fat powdered milk in water.
- * I seldom use cornstarch, but find whole wheat flour can also serve as a thickener.
- * Instead of fatty sausage or bacon, fry small patties of lean ground beef, or slices of extra firm tofu.
- * Replace lard, bacon drippings, tallow with un hardened plant oils, and try using less.
- * Leave out the ham hock or bacon chunk when making soup.

Here are some examples of my experiments.

My former wife was great for preparing Tex-Mex foods. For Tacos, she used a mix made by a prominent USA spice company. When I saw (and tasted) that salt was early on the list of ingredients, I

volunteered to make my own. I obtained some salt free chili powder, some dried garlic flakes and oregano, and mixed with a small amount of whole wheat flour. My version became the favorite with wife and two teen agers.

I have written elsewhere about replacing part of lean ground beef with soy tempeh or extra firm soy tofu, mashed, in such dishes as meat loaf, stew, pasta / spaghetti, and mock steak.

Be inventive. Enjoy flavorful foods through a long life.

Dr. Donald A. Miller is author of "Easy Health Diet" <http://easyhealthdiet.com/diet.htm>, "Easy Exercise All Ages" <http://easyhealthdiet.com/eeaa.htm>, and numerous free articles on health <http://easyhealthdiet.com/articles/>. Seven of ten deaths are caused by preventable diseases.

How to Decorate Ethnic

By Yuwanda Black

FIVE EASY STEPS TO DECORATING ETHNIC

NEW YORK, NY – With all that is happening in the world today – the threat of war, falling stock prices, a recession (in spite of what economists say) – more and more of us are nesting. That is, we are spending more time at home.

While it is hard to control what happens in the outside world, home is where you decide the who, what, where, when and why. Ethnic decor is filled with endless options to spice up your living space. However, you may wonder, what is ethnic decor.

"Ethnic decor is more a feeling than a science," says Marcelo Velez of the interior design firm Velez Hayes in New York City. "When you say modern, country, French, et cetera, an instant picture comes to mind. Ethnic decor is different. Many cannot define it, but know it when they see it."

This open-ended approach is what makes ethnic decorating fun. It's eclectic, inclusive, colorful and most of all, unique. It allows you to fill in blanks for yourself, using an internal palette to satisfy decorating needs.

Here are five handy ideas to get you started:

Pick a room to start: Thinking in terms of one room narrows your scope so the project doesn't seem overwhelming, while also limiting cost as you feel your way into the project.

Decide which ethnicity(ies) you will focus on: African style is different from Middle Eastern is different from American Indian, et cetera. However, don't be afraid to blend elements from several cultures. Again, that's the fun of ethnic decor – the possibilities are endless.

Start with an object as the focal point and decorate around it: This can be an ethnic painting, a

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sculpture, a piece of furniture, et cetera. The bigger the better. Be careful, though, not to overwhelm your space.

Choose a color scheme: Ethnic decor is very festive, so think outside the box in terms of colors, patterns, surfaces. Soon, you will find yourself drawn to a few colors that work well together.

Listen to your likes and dislikes; your instincts: Many times, an object or color will "speak" to you. And, if everyone insists that this painting doesn't go with that rug, but you like it, go with it. The final product should make you the happiest.

Now, relax and enjoy!

Yuwanda & Cassandra Black are co-owners of

. Ethnic Home Decor offers soft

home furnishings with ethnic themes at affordable prices. For more information or to schedule an interview, send email to

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