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The Moms' Guide to Meal Makeovers

By Lisa M. Hendey

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The Moms' Guide to Meal Makeovers - Author Interview

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Shake the kids awake, start their day with a healthy breakfast, and pack their nutritious lunch boxes. Dive them to school, work all day, pick them up, drive them to four scout meetings, three sports practices and two ballet lessons. Pick them all up, bring them home, help them with their homework, and prepare a fast and nutritious home cooked meal. Sound impossible? Thanks to dietitians Janice Newell Bissex and Liz Weiss, authors of the new book *The Moms' Guide to Meal Makeovers* (Broadway Books, January 2004, paperback, 349 pages), at least the cooking part of this crazy equation sounds attainable. Most mothers today want desperately to provide enjoyable and nutritious family meals, but feel overwhelmed by the task of doing so on a daily (or if you have teenage boys in the house, hourly) basis. Invest the time to read this great book by Weiss and Bissex and you will learn that it goes beyond the classis cookbook to include tips to actually "makeover" the way you approach feeding your family.

LH: Janice Newell Bissex and Liz Weiss, authors of the new book *The Moms' Guide to Meal Makeovers*, thank you so much for your time and for your participation in this Book Spotlight interview! Please start of by telling us how the two of you came together to write this wonderful book.

Liz & Janice: We came together to write the book because we're moms and we're dietitians ... and we know how tough it can be to feed a family well. Today's families are busy and on the go. And oftentimes, meals get tossed together quickly. Quick (if you do it right) can be healthy but for lots of folks, quick means a meal of fast food, take-out, and convenience foods -- most of which are loaded with sodium, saturated fat and trans fats and lacking in fiber and important vitamins, minerals, and antioxidants. Our book offers fast solutions for feeding kids a healthy diet and presents tips and recipes for getting super easy, super delicious, and super nutritious "family" meals on the table ... night after night!

LH: Can you please explain the concept of "Meal Makeovers" and why this is such an important idea

for our families?

Liz & Janice: Our goal as authors, dietitians, and busy moms is to take what families are already doing and to make it a little bit better. Here's an example: Say you're making tuna salad sandwiches on white bread with potato chips on the side for lunch. That's fine but where's the fiber? Where's the vegetable? Where's the fruit? To give it a healthy makeover, we (The Meal Makeover Moms) start by switching from a can of tuna to a can of boneless, skinless pink salmon, because salmon is one of the richest sources of health-enhancing omega-3 fats in the diet. We use a canola-based mayonnaise - also a good source of omega-3 fats - and add a shredded carrot. It's easy to peel and shred a carrot on a box grater and it adds color, crunch, and important antioxidants such as beta-carotene. To finish off the sandwich, we stuff the mixture into a whole wheat pita pocket for extra fiber. Serve some crunchy grapes on the side and go ahead and offer a few chips as well ... just make them sweet potato chips!

That's what we mean by, "meal makeover." It's easy.

LH: I have two sons, both of whom are active in sports and activities that keep my after school hours incredibly crazy. I know that the concepts in your book have helped me dread "dinner hour" less since I've implemented them in my own home. What are some survival tips you can offer to moms like me who might find it easier to just pull out a box of mac and cheese or drive through rather than taking time to cook?

Liz & Janice: Taking the time to cook (even if it's just a few short minutes) is a gift every mom can give to her child. When fast food and convenience meals become the mainstay of a child's diet, that child loses out on a host of important nutrients (calcium, iron, vitamin C, fiber, antioxidants ... to name just a few) that will keep him/her healthy and vital today and in years to come. You can make fast meals at home that actually take less time than driving to a fast food restaurant or waiting for the pizza delivery man. Here's a quick kid-friendly, "fast" meal that you can toss together in minutes when all you have time for is a box of mac & cheese (this is actually a yummy recipe for adults too).

Mexicali Mac & Cheese: The next time you're at the supermarket, look for the healthiest brand of mac & cheese you can find ... one without artificial colors and flavors. To that mac & cheese, add 2 tablespoons of canola or olive oil vs. the 1/4 cup of butter that is often recommended and use 1% lowfat milk vs. whole milk. To take it a step further, add about 3/4 cup each of canned black beans (drain and rinse first to wash away some of the sodium) and corn, and a little bit of salsa. Now you've got a fast and healthy Mexicali Mac & Cheese.

LH: I know that you have included many recipes that will appeal to finicky eaters (like my youngest!) – what are some of your favorite recipes in the book?

Liz & Janice: OK, you could also call Janice's youngest daughter a 'finicky eater'. In fact, most children at one time or another go through a finicky stage. It's important for parents to never give up on introducing new foods to children ... even when some tend to be picky and reject many of the foods moms and dads make. We urge parents to avoid becoming "short-order cooks" — catering to each family member's individual likes and dislikes — but rather, to make one meal the whole family will love. We tested all of our recipes not only on our children, but also on neighborhood kids and adults to make

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sure that they were all happily accepted. Some of our family favorites include Mexican Lasagna, Flaky Fish Sticks, No-Crabs-Allowed Cakes, Scalloped Spuds with Broccoli, Oh-So-Easy Chicken Parmesan, Halftime Taco Chili, Confetti Chicken Wraps, Bulgur & Carrot Pilaf, Cheese Ravioli with Pumpkin Sauce, Banana Chocolate Chip Muffins, and Chocolate Pudding with Toppers.

LH: A downfall for many moms who try to throw together something for dinner is not having the right things in the house. I enjoyed "The Makeover Meal Pantry" chapter. Can you say a few words about shopping and the shopping list resource you have available at your web site?

Liz & Janice: Pre-planning is an important part of being a successful Meal Makeover Mom. If parents have a well-stocked pantry, it's not only possible but easy to whip up a healthy, tasty meal in minutes. A bag of frozen tortellini along with frozen broccoli can be transformed into our delicious Tortellini with Broccoli Pesto in just 10 minutes. On our website, www.MealMakeoverMoms.com, we offer a Customized Supermarket Shopping List. The nice thing about this shopping list is that you can tweak it to include only those items that your family likes. You can then print it out and keep it near your fridge so you can put a check next to the items you need or run out of. It's easy to maintain a healthy and well-stocked pantry if you have an organized shopping list by your side. So, on those nights when

6:00pm rolls around and you don't have dinner planned, just look in your makeover pantry and toss together a quick, healthy, delicious meal with the ingredients you have on hand.

LH: Liz and Janice, thank you again for your time and for this wonderful book! Are there any closing thoughts you'd like to share with our readers?

Liz & Janice: Good nutrition can be easy when meals are quick, familiar, and delicious ... that's what The Moms' Guide to Meal Makeovers is all about. On a final note: We encourage families to eat meals together as much as possible. It strengthens family bonds and promotes good nutrition among family members. We hope you enjoy our book and website. Please be sure to join our free, online "Meal Makeover Moms' Club" at www.MealMakeoverMoms.com and do stay in touch!

For more information or to order The Moms' Guide to Meal Makeovers visit <http://www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/ASIN/0767914236/digitalcropper-20>

Lisa M. Hendey is a mother of two sons, webmaster of numerous web sites, including <http://www.digitalcropper.com>, <http://www.christincoloring.com>, <http://www.catholicmom.com> and an avid reader.

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Easy Meals for Moms on the Go!

By Sarah Delaporte

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For moms and students, eating healthy and inexpensively is a necessity to maintain energy but many times hard to accomplish.

Here are some quick tips for grabbing a quick and inexpensive meal when time, energy and money are in short supply! :) Eat for under \$1 a meal and give your body the healthy energy it needs.

For several years now, I have tried to come up with ways to eat quickly, nutritiously and inexpensively. Combining these three aspects has been a difficult goal, but I believe it has and can be achieved. Here are some insider tips I have learned that I would love to share with you! :)

For \$1 with time in short supply, I stop at McDonalds and order a salad with Vinegrette dressing. They have dark green leaves, tomatoes and very fresh vegetables in their salads making this a very healthy alternative. For an extra buck and added protein, I add the breaded chicken sandwich from the dollar menu, tear the chicken into pieces and add those to my salad. (I often throw the sandwich bread away or offer it as a 'healthy' snack to nearby birds.)

For breakfast, I keep the all in one nutritional drinks close at hand. When I have no time to spare, I can quickly drink one of these on the road and have my nutritional needs met without the time! Plus, they taste good too. :) Yum! (These average \$1 a can)

For lunches, you can use tortillas and add peanut butter and jelly to them. Then roll them up and cut them in half for a healthy snack.

I also store frozen goods in the freezer at work. This saves me money and I am quickly able to zap fish, chicken, or vegetables in the microwave for a healthy and inexpensive meal. This method also keeps the food longer so you won't have to always remember to pack a meal. Another suggestion is to store frozen juice at work and make it before lunch in your own container (providing there is room in the company refrigerator). This is a healthy and inexpensive alternative to pop.

Whatever you do, make sure you are hydrated and well-fed. Your health depends on it!

Sarah Delaporte is the owner of Freebie Coupon Corner. She loves helping consumers save money on their groceries with her helpful e-book publications. For more information about Freebie Coupon Corner, you can visit the website at: <http://www.couponcorner.net>



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