

A diet program for life

Carbohydrates are the key to a smart way of eating, writes **IVY FLEMING**.

A diet can last a lifetime only if it involves eating good food that also tastes good.

Diet trends come and go because the eating habits can't possibly be maintained for more than a few weeks at a time when you consider people's busy lifestyles, dining out and family meals.

Not everyone can go every day without cake or carbohydrates.

So dietitian Shamala Ratnesar went about developing the Total Life Diet, which is a nutrition, health and weight loss program.

"I wanted a healthy diet to follow for the rest of my life," says Ratnesar, who admits to trying numerous diets as a teenager.

Ratnesar, whose studies included two years at the University of Wollongong, has had years of experience working in the public hospital system and in private practice.

She has developed the program based on real science and says that food quantities are one of the most important considerations for losing weight and controlling blood glucose levels.

"People need to know how to eat over an entire day," Ratnesar says.



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"I'm really keen to clear the confusion," she adds, saying that it's fine to eat carbohydrates and sugar in the right amounts.

Ratnesar says the secret formula to losing weight, maximising energy levels, controlling blood glucose levels and staying healthy is two to three serves of carbohydrate foods at meals and one to two serves as snacks. And protein and omega-3s are important too.

"At some meals, people eat too many carbs and in others they eat too little – it's about eating a steady amount," she says.

The *Total Life Diet* book also includes 80 meal plans and 170 recipes (including cakes), that Ratnesar has "tried and tasted" over the years, with some help from her mother.



Dietitian Shamala Ratnesar says food quantities are one of the most important considerations for losing weight.

Her favourite meals include Atlantic salmon, prawns and omega-3 eggs.

Ratnesar is also an advocate for omega-3s, having already published two books about the benefits of the fatty acids.

Her latest book also includes information on how to live healthy with diabetes, how to read labels on packaged foods ("people look at the nutrition panel but don't read the

ingredients – and light doesn't mean low-fat"), and tips for eating out and motivation.

Overall, the emphasis is on eating more variety in less quantities.

"People I see are shocked they can eat rice and bread – it's the quantity that matters," Ratnesar says.

Ratnesar adds that men can follow her diet too. "It's not any harder for men," she says.



The Total Life Diet
Shamala Ratnesar,
Total Life Diet
Centre, \$35

SPICY ORANGE CHICKEN

SERVED WITH AN ORANGE, COUSCOUS AND CHICKPEA SALAD

This is a Moroccan-inspired chicken dish which also works well with fish, prawns, lamb or pork
(Serves 4)

INGREDIENTS

4x150g lean chicken breast fillets, cut in half vertically to make up 8 thin small pieces
1 tbsp olive or canola oil
½-¾ teaspoon orange rind or the rind from 1 orange
1 tsp orange juice
2 tsp sugar
A little salt and plenty of cracked pepper
2 tsp powdered cinnamon
2 tsp powdered spicy Spanish spice or smoked paprika
2 tsp powdered cumin

Orange, couscous and chickpea salad

2 cups cooked couscous
1x400g can or 325g canned and drained chickpeas
2 medium oranges, segmented
¼ tsp orange rind or the rind from 1 orange
¼ cup orange juice
¼ cup spring onions, chopped
1 Lebanese cucumber, sliced
½ cup celery, sliced
2 cups baby spinach or rocket leaves
¼ cup parsley, chopped
Salad dressing:
1 tbsp olive oil
2 tbsp white wine vinegar
¼ cup orange juice
½ tsp sugar
¼ tsp orange rind
¼-1 tsp powdered cinnamon
Salt and pepper to taste
2 tbsp fresh, chopped parsley to garnish.

METHOD

1. Make deep diagonal cuts on the chicken breasts and rub in the oil, orange rind, orange juice, sugar and spices. Marinate for at least 10 minutes.
2. Toss the salad ingredients together. Combine the salad dressing ingredients and pour over the salad. Toss gently.
3. Heat a grill pan and sear the chicken for about two minutes on each side. Turn the heat down and cook the chicken slowly for about 10-15 minutes, turning occasionally and letting the chicken cook in its own juices.
4. Place two pieces of chicken breast on top of each salad, garnish with parsley and serve immediately.
(from *The Total Life Diet*)