

Cooking for Real People (Not Chefs!)

SELF
SPECIAL
ISSUE

SELF Dishes

74 Easy, Healthy Recipes

Juicy Burgers, Satisfying Salads, Even Dessert!

Quickie Dinners 18 Meals Under 30 Minutes

Guilt-Free Grilling Your Summer Favorites, Lightened Up!

BONUS
The
Feel-Full
Diet
Eat Well and
Drop Pounds
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Luscious, lowfat
ice cream pie p.106

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Secrets of a private chef

How do stars stay svelte and satisfied? By hiring a kitchen magician who can make low-calorie dishes taste as if they're not. Jennifer Iserloh, 33, a private chef in New York City who cooks for celebs such as Annie Leibovitz, began her career with a personal health goal in mind. "Many of my relatives are very overweight, and a few have died from heart attacks," she says. "I grew up in a family where we adored food and ate a lot of it—too much of it. So my interest became: How can I eat what I love and be healthy?" How indeed! By choosing lowfat, flavor-drenched ingredients, she succeeded—and, along the way, pared off about 35 pounds over the past 15 years. "I was surprised when I lost weight working as a chef around all that food, but cooking and researching nutrition has allowed me to share my excitement about it and enjoy what I eat without overindulging," Iserloh says. She answers your questions with some health-saving, lip-smacking secrets she relies on. —Tula Karras



Dressed to thrill
Top your greens with a deliciously light homemade dressing.

Q I don't have time to fix healthy meals. Is there a kitchen gadget that can make it easier to eat better?

A Yes! Invest in an electric mini food chopper. If you don't have the time or patience to slice and dice vegetables, this quickie prep tool is for you. You can also

blend soups and fruit smoothies with it. A basic chopper sells for as little as \$30, but for the most versatility, splurge on the KitchenAid Immersion Blender With Whisk and Chopper (at left); you can insert the tall blender tool into most sturdy bowls or pots. \$130; KitchenAid.com

Food prep for stir-fries, pasta sauces and salads stuffed with veggies is a cinch with a chopper.



Q Salad dressings can be so caloric, but I don't like most lowfat versions. Do you have a recipe for a tasty light dressing?

A Roasted tomatoes give a rich, creamy quality to dressings without adding fat. And relax—roasting tomatoes is a lot easier than you think! Here's my no-fail technique: Heat your oven to 400° and cover an edged baking sheet with aluminum foil. In a bowl, toss 1 lb cherry tomatoes (about 12, any stems or leaves removed) with 2 tsp olive oil, then place tomatoes on the baking sheet. Sprinkle tomatoes with 1 tsp chopped fresh thyme, ¼ tsp salt and ½ tsp freshly ground black pepper. Roast for 20 to 25 minutes; transfer to a food processor or mini food chopper. Add 2 tbsp sherry vinegar and puree until smooth. You'll end up with about 1 cup of dressing, enough for 8 side salads. (Store any unused dressing in an airtight container in the refrigerator and use within 4 days.) A serving (2 tbsp) has a slim 20 calories and 1.2 fat grams. If you prefer ranch for your salads and veggies, then log on to SelfDishes.com for my simple Lowfat Creamy Artichoke Ranch dressing recipe. It makes a great dip.

Q How can I satisfy a sweet tooth without taking in too much sugar?

A Start with a healthy food, such as whole-grain crackers, fruit or skim milk, and add a small amount of a sugary treat. Figure out what you're craving: Is it sweet and crunchy? Have popcorn (bonus: it's a whole grain!) with melted marshmallows on top, or apple slices dipped into a spoonful of caramel syrup. Are you a chocolate addict? Sip no-sugar-added cocoa made with skim milk.

Q I love lasagna, but it's so rich. How can I reduce fat and calories without sacrificing the yumminess factor?

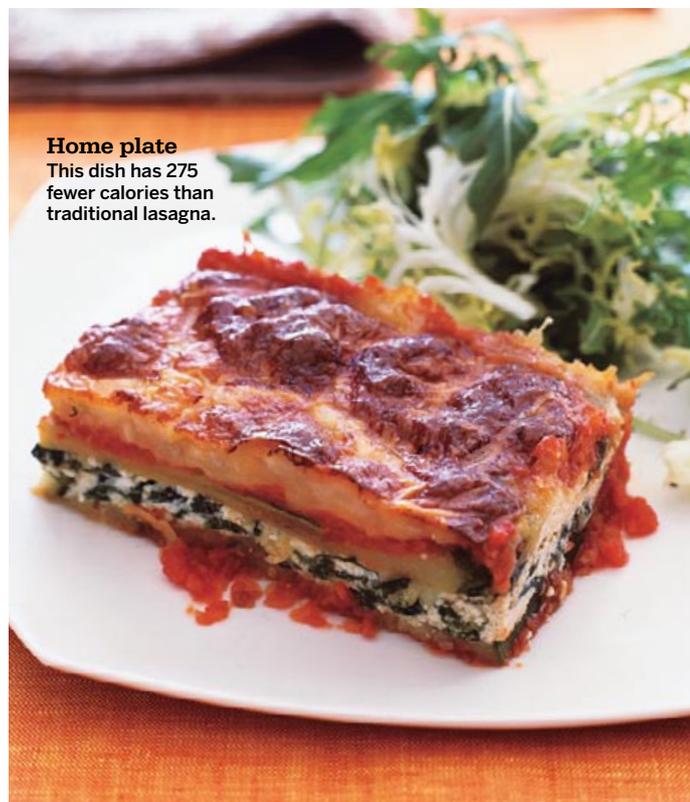
A Use zucchini instead of noodles. The result isn't only fewer calories; it's also more potassium and vitamin A. I do keep the cheese (you need a little fat to carry the flavor of the veggies), but use lowfat versions to make it even healthier.

LUSCIOUS NOODLE-FREE LASAGNA Serves 4

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| Vegetable oil cooking spray | ¼ tsp freshly grated nutmeg |
| ½ lb (7½ cups) fresh spinach | 1 can (14.5 oz) whole peeled tomatoes |
| 2 lb zucchini, cut lengthwise into ½-inch-thick slices | ½ small yellow or red onion, quartered |
| 15 oz part-skim ricotta | 1 clove garlic |
| 1 egg white | ¼ tsp freshly ground black pepper |
| ½ cup grated reduced-fat Parmesan | 1 cup grated part-skim mozzarella |
| 2 tbsp chopped fresh basil | |
| 1 tsp salt | |

Heat oven to 425°. Coat an 8" x 8" baking pan with cooking spray. Coat a large skillet with cooking spray; heat over high heat. Add spinach; stir until leaves wilt, about 5 minutes. Place in a colander. Coat skillet with cooking spray again; heat over high heat. Cook zucchini in batches, 2 to 3 minutes per side; drain on paper towels. Squeeze excess moisture from spinach. Mix spinach, ricotta, egg white, ¼ cup of the Parmesan, basil, ½ tsp of the salt and nutmeg in a bowl; set aside. Puree tomatoes, onion, garlic, pepper and remaining ½ tsp salt in a food processor. Spread half the sauce on bottom of pan. Layer zucchini on top, then half the ricotta mixture. Add a layer of zucchini and remaining half of ricotta and sauce. Sprinkle with mozzarella and remaining ¼ cup Parmesan. Bake, uncovered, until cheese browns, about 30 minutes. Cool slightly before cutting.

THE DISH 324 calories per serving
13.8 g fat (8.6 g saturated) 5.1 g fiber 27.3 g carbs 28.5 g protein



Home plate
This dish has 275 fewer calories than traditional lasagna.

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP: JEFF ALEXANDER/JUPITERIMAGES.COM; MICHAEL EDWARDS; HAIR AND MAKEUP: DEANNA MELLUSO FOR LANCÔME; ANN STRATTON; FOOD STYLING: ANNE DISRUDE; PROP STYLING: DENISE CANTER; OPPOSITE: FROM TOP: JOHN KERNICK; KITCHENAID.COM.

Q What's the biggest mistake people make when trying to cook healthfully?

A Most of us associate flavor with fatty, rich foods, so in order to lighten up dishes, we tend to eliminate fat from recipes without replacing it with anything tasty. You end up with food so bland, you can't stick to eating it for long. You are cooking healthfully to nourish your body, not punish your taste buds. So use flavorful, nonfat ingredients, such as fresh herbs, onions and garlic, to make meals more appetizing. And don't be afraid to add a little healthy fat, such as olive oil; it helps make the meal more satisfying. As a general rule, I halve the amount of fat in any traditional recipe I cook from and always use reduced-fat dairy.



Q Fish is so healthy, but I never make it because I don't know an easy way to prepare it. Any advice?

A Nearly all fish cooks quickly, so don't be worried about the time factor—you can get dinner on the table in about 20 minutes. And fresh fish is so flavorful that you don't need to doctor it much to make it tasty, so even a kitchen novice can cook it. My favorite trick is to sprinkle both sides of a white-fish fillet with salt and pepper, place on a piece of parchment paper in a baking dish and top with ¼ cup of breadcrumbs. Then I lightly coat the top with cooking spray and bake at 400°, until fish is flaky and breadcrumbs are brown, about 10 to 15 minutes. You can also add garlic and fresh herbs, such as thyme or cilantro. When done, squirt with juice from half a lemon before serving. For salmon, I salt and pepper a fillet and top it with 3 or 4 thin slices of lemon or orange (citrus cuts the strong salmon smell). Then I drizzle with 1 tsp olive oil and bake at 400° for 15 to 20 minutes. The result: a fast dinner that tastes fabulous.



Have a question for Jennifer Iserloh?
Visit Self.com/forums from June 18 through June 29 or e-mail her at jenniferiserloh@self.com.