

A couple pages (below) from the introduction of a healthy eating cookbook I worked on (text only) for a local fitness professional.

Introduction

The Grocery Store

The produce section is the one place a shopper should spend most of their time. The selection is wide, and the benefits numerous.



MA KING A PLAN

Many people open their cupboards a day or two after they've shopped to find they have nothing to eat. It's a common occurrence since the grocery store is filled with impulse indulgences that may satiate a certain craving at the time but rarely satisfy hunger. To avoid this familiar practice, it's always wise to approach a shopping trip with a few ideas in mind.

THE LIST

Grocery shopping without a list is like taking a road trip without a map. It just shouldn't be done. If there's a list, people generally stick to it. Besides the obvious benefits of spending less time or money, you'll avoid those pesky detours that bring unneeded items into everyone's shopping cart.

THE ENTRANCE

The front of the supermarket is normally reserved for promotional items. The price might be right, but you'll rarely find them on a grocery list. Even though most of it looks good, it's best to fill your cart with the essentials.

PRODUCE

This section of the store is a virtual goldmine for the healthy eater, and should be the one place where you spend most of your time. Pick out fruits and vegetables that are ripe with color. The colors reflect the different vitamins, minerals, and phytonutrients in the selection so choose a wide array — they all offer different health benefits.

And if you're looking for convenience, remember that these provisions aren't just relegated to the frozen food aisle. Almost every grocery store offers a variety of bagged salad mixes and pre-cut fruits and vegetables. What's more convenient than that?

REFRIGERATED

Though you've already filled your cart, there's still some room for a number of items in this section. Choose lean cuts of meat and skinless poultry. Pick up fish, namely, salmon since it's a great source of omega-3 fatty acid. Opt for skim milk, instead of whole, or even try soy. And don't forget the eggs or yogurt. They're great options for meals on the run. For a change of pace, try tofu, seitan, or tempeh. There are a number of ways to use these healthy alternatives in a meal. But steer clear of processed meats, cheeses, and the like. They're filled with sodium, sugar, and preservatives.

FROZEN

Most people have become quite accustomed to frequenting this section of the store. It's a literal smorgasbord of quick-fix meals, snacks, and desserts. But let's just stick to the basics here. Try to fill your cart with items you can cook or bake with, not items already prepared to be cooked or baked. Buy frozen fruit without added sugars or syrups and frozen veggies without added sauces or seasonings. Better yet

try something new – like edamame. It's an easily wonderful snack that's good for you too. And don't forget the spinach. It's a must in any kitchen.

DRY GOODS

There is very little you need from the inside of the supermarket so swing through fast to pick up the least processed of the essentials. Select whole-wheat breads and pastas, brown rice, natural grains, and bulk nuts. Be careful when picking out any dressings or condiments. Often times, they

are filled with sugar and unpronounceable ingredients. And it's always smart to keep some olive oil, a variety of vinegars, bottled peppers, canned tuna, and even all-fruit spreads on hand. They're a staple in any healthy pantry.

READING LABELS

Nutrition Facts food labels are a great reference for you to quickly identify the information you might need to make healthy choices in your diet. The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) requires that all food packages include the common name of the product, the manufacturer, the product's quantity in terms of weight, measure, or count, its ingredients, serving size, and most importantly, nutritional facts or quantities of specified nutrients in an individual serving. If you're watching your weight, cholesterol, blood pressure, or overall diet, it's best to take a look at these facts and understand what they mean in relation to you and your body.

But what about the claims the manufacturers make about their food? These claims may be all a marketing tool to inspire us to buy, but this too is regulated by the FDA so that any statement found on or in relation to a given product must be factual and supported. The most common claims found on today's food packaging:

Calorie-free – fewer than 5 calories per serving

Low-calorie – equal to or less than 40 calories per serving

Sugar-free – less than 0.5g of sugar per serving

Fat-free - less than 0.5g of fat per serving

Low-fat – equal to or less than 3g of fat per serving

Low in Saturated Fat – equal to or less than 1g of saturated fat per serving

Low-sodium – equal to or less than 140mg of sodium per serving

Excellent Source – one serving contains 20% or more of the Daily Value for a single nutrient

Good Source – one serving contains between 10% and 19% of the Daily Value for a single nutrient

Reduced – the product contains at least 25% less of a nutrient or 25% fewer calories than the regular product

Fortified/Enriched – an ingredient has merely been added for a health benefit

Next time you're walking down the aisles of your local grocery store, take a moment to review the product labels, not necessarily the packaging, before dropping them in the shopping cart. You'll save yourself some pounds, inches, and a whole lot of cash. And that's the store.