



Advice for Deen and diabetics dining out

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Paula Deen's recent proclamation that she has Type 2 diabetes has stirred up a big batch of debate about her butter-, bacon- and sugar-glazed recipes that may have led her down an unhealthy path.

The cookbook author and TV cooking show celebrity joins an estimated 25 million Americans diagnosed with Type 2 diabetes, linked to being overweight, overeating and a lack of exercise. Deen's high profile and public discussion surrounding her personal plan to eat more healthfully and hit the treadmill more often have elevated interest in what it takes to live with Type 2 diabetes.

Dietitians know diabetes

It's good to know that the so-called "diabetic diet," known for its strict, often complicated regimens, is fading into medical history in favor of an easier to live with approach. Dietitians focus on their clients' real-life food challenges, and that includes practical guidelines for dining out.

"In fact, with the assistance of a registered dietitian, diet, exercise and weight loss can also reverse prediabetes, which affects an estimated 79 million people," said registered dietitian Constance Brown-Riggs, in a press release from the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics sent to the media in response to the Paula Deen diabetes news.

Deen -- who says she doesn't want to change her life, but will change what she does in her life -- is right on track with current nutrition advice.

"To be successful, your diabetes plan should work around your needs and lifestyle and not vice versa," said registered dietitian Hope S. Warshaw, author of "Guide to Healthy Restaurant Eating" (American Diabetes Association, 2009). "People don't have to ax sugary foods from food choices. You can learn to savor the taste of a few slices of pizza, grab a hamburger and garden salad when time is not on your side."

During the recent interview on NBC's "Today" show when she revealed the state of her health, Deen said, "You can have diabetes and have a piece of cake. You cannot have diabetes and eat a whole cake."

No break from eating right

What's different for diners with diabetes is that there's not as much leeway for throwing caution to the wind and giving in to a big splurge.

"Remember that even if it's a special occasion, your blood sugar doesn't give you a 'special occasion' break," cautioned dietitian Jackie Newgent, author of "The All-Natural Diabetes Cookbook: The Whole Food Approach to Great Taste and Healthy Eating" (American Diabetes Association, 2007), "so sticking with your individualized

eating plan is important whatever day it is.”

Newgent, a classically trained chef, was inspired to write the cookbook when her father was diagnosed with diabetes. She encourages enjoying flavorful foods with an emphasis on fresh ingredients.

“If you’re new to dining out with diabetes, simply take small steps,” she said. “Pick one restaurant. Know the menu in advance. Determine what fits into your meal plan before you go.”

Be firm about what you want, suggests dietitian Lois Moss-Barnwell, who counsels diabetics in the Chicago area. “Return a dish if it shows up with added carbohydrates you weren’t expecting, such as sweet glazes or breading. Ask for a replacement without the surprise ingredients.”

Dietitian Jill Weisenberger is author of the forthcoming book “Diabetes Weight Loss -- Week by Week,” to be published by the American Diabetes Association this year, and she offers these tips for dining out:

Be picky. Don’t use up your calorie or carbohydrate budget on food that isn’t delicious. If it isn’t awesome, push it aside.

Be the first to order, so you’re not influenced by the choices of your dinner companions.

Reconsider the meaning of value. Instead of letting cost rule, pay attention to nutritional value. Instead of feeling wasteful for leaving food, remind yourself your body is healthier without it.

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