

the Cooks Corner

By Carolyn Nichols

Marge called a while back wanting some lo-cal recipes. Mike had been to the doctor for his yearly physical. The doctor made it real plain that Mike had to lose weight.

“Mike was really grumbling when he arrived back home from the doctor. ‘What happened to doctors with caring and compassionate attitudes?’ he complained.”

“ ‘Just what did the doctor say?’ I inquired.”

“ ‘He said in no uncertain terms that I was overweight, my blood pressure was too high, my cholesterol was over the approved limit, my blood sugar levels were elevated, my knees were shot and I was short of breath. The nurse asked if he wanted to set me up for the treadmill test. The doctor said absolutely not! He was supposed to be helping people, not killing them!’”

“Mike said he tried to smooth things over. He told the doctor, ‘Doc, I thought we were friends.’ The doctor said, ‘I like you, Mike, that is why I’m telling you just how it is. What’s more, Marge and your kids love you and they would probably like to have you around for a long time. A horse or mule trader would say there is no trade left in you! Am I making myself clear?’”

“Mike complained, ‘You’re not being very sympathetic. You could cut me a little slack, you know!’”

“ ‘You’re whining about cutting a few calories and exercising more. Quit acting like I ruined your day. I just had a kid throw up on me so top that!’ Doc retorted.”

Marge said she almost hated to ask what happened next but Mike continued, “One thing for sure, his bedside manner didn’t improve. He gave me a

couple of prescriptions, made me another appointment in a month and set me up to go to a nutrition and diet class. I tried to tell him that I didn’t have time for such nonsense, I would send you in my place. ‘My time could be put to better use than attending a fat people’s show and tell class.’ Doc turned all red. I thought he was going to have a stroke.”

“ ‘You better make time. Matters of quality of life or perhaps even death are not nonsense. If you open your mind and listen to this dietician and then apply her teachings to your daily living, it will be your lucky day. Few people will benefit from the class as much as you.’ He was starting to scare me or I would have felt _____ by that last remark. Just to save his life and get him off my back, I agreed to go to the class.”

“When does Mike have to attend this class?” I asked.

“That is where he is now,” Marge replied. “He wouldn’t be happy if he knew I repeated what the doctor said about this medical condition.”

I thought to myself that I would like to be a little mouse in that classroom.

Marge said, “I will call you first chance I get with an update. I have a feeling portion control is going to be a big issue.

It was several days before Marge called back. She said, “Mike is not adjusting to the diet. They talk about stages of grief. Well, I am here to tell you there are stages of dieting and we’ve been through several of them already! There has been Anger- ‘You can’t expect a working man to exist on this amount of food.’ We’ve experienced Procrastination ‘I’ll start the diet after the church dinner Sunday’;

Denial- ‘I’m not that heavy, a person just matures with age and you would think a doctor would be aware of that fact.’ I’ve caught him hiding snacks. He thinks if we don’t see him eat the snack, the calories don’t count. Yeah, right!”

“The kids are enjoying this ‘let’s find Dad’s stash’ game. If they find it, they take it. Mike can’t say anything because he’s not supposed to eat the snacks in the first place. Marc wrote a poem for his dad. It goes:

*Hey diddle, diddle,
Dad’s watching his middle,
He hopes soon to whittle,
Making it little,
But eating is such fun,
I think that the only way it will
get done,
Is if his dish runs away with his
spoon.*

“Mike didn’t see much humor in the poem but I thought it was pretty clever. But then Mike isn’t seeing much humor in anything these days. Food creeps into his conversations. I thought the only colors Mike was aware of were John Deere green, Allis Chalmers orange, Massey Ferguson red and Caterpillar yellow but I was wrong. Some friends sent us pictures of their vacation in the mountains. The mountains had snow caps on them. Mike said, ‘Wow, these pictures are great! Looks like big mounds of whipped cream!’”

“Mike decided to paint the barn. I overheard him asking the guy at the paint store for ‘cherry pie’ red. I was planting some flowers and Mike walked by and ran his hand through the potting soil and said, ‘Good rich soil, about the color of good rich chocolate cake.’”

“You won’t believe what he did in church Sunday. I was so embarrassed. During the sermon, the preacher said, ‘Man can not live by bread alone.’ Mike shouted, ‘Amen, he needs some gravy on it!’”

“How was Mike’s pulse beating after the nutrition class,” I asked.

Marge replied, “That went better than I expected due to Mike’s interpretation of what the dietician said. For instance Mike told her he liked snacks a couple of times a day and at bed time. She told him that healthy snacks were quite acceptable. She asked him what he liked for a bed time snack. He told her he liked popcorn and she said pop-

corn was a very healthy snack and he could have a cupful every evening. She told him nuts were very healthy too. Mike said that this lady had some sense. 'She understood a working man's appetite.' She agreed he couldn't exist on rabbit food. He swears she told him that there wasn't any bad foods and that he could have a serving of most anything he wanted."

I'm thinking to myself, "Why is this man so happy? A cupful of popcorn is a long way from the washtub full he ate every evening."

Marge said, "I know just what you're thinking. I was having the same thought. He was just rattling on with all his good news. By gosh he could have a cupful of popcorn every night if he so desired. Suddenly he got quiet. It was like a light clicked on. This man looked at me and in all seriousness said, 'She did mean one cup of unpopped corn, didn't she?' His theory on the nuts is that the chocolate of the candy bar was put there to make them safer to eat while you're driving."

"That night for supper Mike piled his plate full as usual. I said, 'Mike, that is not going to work.' 'Hey, I went to Skinny School and the lady said I could have a serving of most anything I wanted.' I told him, 'A serving, Mike, not a plateful that needs side boards.' 'A serving or a plateful, there is not difference,' Mike retorted. 'I'm afraid there has been a misunderstanding,' I said trying to be diplomatic."

"Mike grumbled at me, 'Who made you warden over the groceries?' I told him that I had been doing some studying too. 'Serving and portion sizes are different than a plateful. For instance most vegetables you can have one half cup, a piece of meat about the size of a deck of cards, a piece of cake two inches square but not with every meal.'

"Just how do you know what a serving size is?" Mike questioned. I told him to look on the box or can and it would tell him the serving size."

"The next morning, Mike got his Jethro bowl (that is what the kids named it but it is really one of my large serving dishes. He poured it full of his favorite cereal. I guess he could tell I was looking at him and he said, 'What's the problem now? I'm aware that I'm on a diet so I'm only eating one serving, one bowl full.' I knew I had to use some tact

so I said, 'Mike, read on the side of the box what a serving is.' I set a measuring cup on the table."

"Mike read the side of the box and poured that amount in the measuring cup. He had look of total disbelief on his face. 'No way, this has to be a misprint. This can't be right.'"

"I must say that portion control has been a real eye opener for him. He is reading labels now. He almost went into shock when he discovered twelve potato chips were a serving. He thought the whole bag and a liter of Coke was a serving."

"He's making himself miserable almost to the point of making himself sick. Not to mention the fact that he is making our lives miserable."

"I will email you some recipes but I wish I could do more to help," I told my friend.

Marge said, "I try to cook meals that are not calorie laden but it's his attitude that I don't know how to deal with. Mike has never been an angry person or a person with a negative attitude or a person who finds fault with everyone. All of a sudden, I'm married to a stranger."

"You are right, that doesn't sound like Mike," I said. "I think I know what the problem is. He feels like he has lost control of his life. He is angry but I think he is using a lot of that anger to cover up the fact that he is scared. He needs to discover he can get control of his life back, one spoonful at a time."

"I believe you are right," Marge replied, "I was just too close to the situation like the old saying 'I couldn't see the forest for the trees.' My nagging is only making the situation worse. I will just cook healthier for all of us. Mike won't feel deprived and we will all benefit. Mike has to decide this is important to him and to his health. He has to want to succeed!"

"All right, you won't nag and I won't inquire. When you believe it's time for a progress report, I'll be anxiously awaiting."

Several weeks went by and not a word was said about Mike's diet. Then one morning Marge called and told me that Mike had been back to the doctor's. He was losing weight and he was in a much better humor. This time he was willing to listen to the doctor. Doc told him that he was proud of Mike's

progress. He was sorry he had been so rough on him but he knew Mike and if he didn't make a believer out of Mike, he wouldn't take him seriously. He explained to Mike that it was much better to avoid health problems or to correct them with nutritional changes than to try and correct them after the fact with drugs or surgery. It's a lot harder to come back from a stroke or heart attack, then it is to push yourself back from the table.

"Doc said there was good reason he sent Mike to that nutrition class. Mike said, 'Yeah, I understand now but I have to tell you I really had my hackles up. I told that that lady that I worked for a living, I didn't push a pencil. I needed substantial food not rabbit food. I told her not to even talk to me about exercise. She had not idea how much walking I did in a day's time. That gal has a pretty tough hide. She didn't argue with me just handed me a pedometer and told me to wear it on my belt. She told me how many miles I needed to walk everyday. At first I was sure that device was malfunctioning. I knew I was walking further than it was registering. I guess I ought to send her some flowers for putting up with me. While I'm at it I might as well send Marge some too. I wasn't too pleasant to be around and she hung tight and supported me all the way just the way she has done all our married life.'"

Marge said, "I will email you a picture of my flowers. They are beautiful. I've noticed Mike is walking places instead of jumping in the truck and driving. I mentioned to him that I had noticed he was walking more. He said 'I feel like I'm in the Service again. Every time I sit down or drive where I could walk, I feel like this contraption on my waist is a drill sergeant yelling, 'Get up! Get moving! Get walking!'"

"Mike said that Doc and him had a really good visit. Doc explained to him while losing weight is the goal, starving is not the road to take. 'That is why nutritional classes are important because being thin is no guarantee against blood sugar problems. You can still get diabetes. You can still face increased risk of heart disease, stroke and cancer not to mention fatigue, poor memory, failing eyesight and all the rest. You simply must eat a balanced diet of nutritious foods monitoring por-

tion control and you must keep moving. No matter what you see on t.v., there is no magic pill or drink that melts fat away. Stress is a big factor. We all know we can't eliminate stress from our lives but we can learn to deal with it."

"Doc said, 'We aren't so different from our animals. Under stress our body goes into the fight or flight mode. Our sugar levels rise to prepare our bodies for action. Maybe we would like to punch someone that made us angry. (But we can't do that!) Or perhaps you are in a situation you would like to escape from but that is not possible. You just can't jump up and run. You can't fight and you can't flee. So what do you do? You worry, you fret, you get angry, you can even end up depressed.'"

"A big meal or high calorie treat or a few drinks won't fix the problems. We must step back and decide how to handle the situation and what our options are. Our thought process will perform at an optimum level if we are eating a balanced diet. The truth is our bodies are still essentially the same as they were 40,000 years ago but our eating and exercise habits have changed drastically."

"What do you know? I was right!" Marge declared. "Doc explained the stages Mike was going through. Doc said that he felt anger which occurs when people feel unsure, overwhelmed and not in control. He said that it usually takes a little time for people to realize anger holds no value. All anger does is hold you back from realizing your goals. He winked at Mike and said, 'It takes some people longer than others to come to this realization. Anger causes stress robbing years of your inner calm. It can even make you ill.'"

"Doc explained that blame is another stage and that it 'has to be someone's fault'. If we can lay the blame on someone else, we can let them fix the problem because it is no longer our problem. Sad to say, many people in our society have this attitude about any problem they encounter in their lives. 'When you realize you are the one in control of the silverware, the amount of food on your plate and what food is on your plate, you also realize blaming is counterproductive. It takes away from your accountability, self reflection and the ability to make effective decisions.'"

"He went on to say there is then the

negative attitude stage, the 'I can't do this attitude'. This stage has a dramatic and negative impact on our morale and mood. Negative attitude is an obstacle to happiness and success whether it be in the work place or on a diet plan. The real wake up call is that most negative attitudes and bad habits are self imposed. These self imposed attitudes and habits are the biggest obstacles to success, they can lead to dissatisfaction with your life, minimize your self-worth thereby installing the feeling you are losing control of your life."

"Commitment happens when you are able to let go of past habits and commit to making changes in your lifestyle and eating habits. Once you are able to do this, your morale and self-worth will improve. A pat on the back, someone saying 'Hey, you are looking good!' helps insure success. Once a person can see results, it becomes easier to be committed to make this work. You will become more energized and have a more positive outlook."

"The doctor told Mike that he had felt some of the stages were tough but he was about to face the toughest stage of all which was maintenance. Old habits are hard to break. Mike might have attained his goal, he felt self-confident, his morale was high and he might have a good sense of self-worth. 'Euphoria can set in and a person can easily slide back to their ways of the past. Habit formation is the goal here. Once a true habit is formed, it becomes a part of the person's behavior pattern. It means a person has adapted to the change process. When this life style is your normal life style, you have truly succeeded.'"

Marge said, "This has not been easy for Mike or for the rest of the family. Permanent changes had to take place but ask anyone with a debilitating illness how important good health is. Maybe the changes we made will also help our children with their health concerns in the future."

"Now after supper Mike asks me if I would like to go for a walk with him. The great part of this is while we are doing something that is good for our health, we are also doing something that is good for our marriage because we actually get to talk to each other, relax and just enjoy each other's company."

"The best news of all is Doc was

pleased with Mike's progress, his test results were improved. The man I love is happy, he feels good, he looks good, life is good!

The Cook's Corner

Carolyn Nichols

This is a super salad with a low calorie dressing. It is pretty to look at, good tasting and a meal in itself, one of my favorites in the summer time.

STAY SLIM SALAD

2 cups iceberg lettuce (or lettuce from the garden)
1/4 cups green onions, chopped
1/2 pound sliced cooked chicken, turkey or ham
2 small bananas, sliced
1 large grapefruit, peeled and sectioned
1 cup cherry tomatoes, halved
1/2 cup celery, sliced

Arrange lettuce and onions on two salad plates. Arrange meat of your choice in center of each plate. Arrange bananas, grapefruit, tomatoes, and celery around meat. Serve with Lime Dressing. Makes two salad servings.

LIME DRESSING

1/4 cup lime juice
2 tablespoons vegetable oil
2 teaspoons sugar
1/2 teaspoon paprika
1/4 teaspoon salt
1/4 teaspoon dry mustard

Combine all salad dressing ingredients in a screw top jar. Shake until well blended.

A LITTLE LIGHTER YEAR ROLLS

1 package yeast
1 cup warm 2% milk (110 to 115 degrees)
1/4 cup sugar
1/4 cup unsweetened applesauce
2 egg whites, beaten
1 teaspoon salt
3 1/2 to 4 cups flour, divided

In a large mixing bowl, dissolve yeast in warm milk. Add the sugar, applesauce, egg whites, salt and 2 cups flour. Beat until smooth. Stir in enough remaining flour to form a soft dough. Turn on to a lightly floured surface; knead until smooth and elastic, about 6-8 minutes (dough will be slightly

sticky). Place in a bowl coated with non-stick spray (turn once to coat top with cooking spray). Cover and let rise in a warm place until doubled in bulk, about one hour. Turn dough back out on lightly floured surface and divide into 24 pieces. Use floured hands to shape dough. Place on 2 baking sheets coated with non-stick spray. Cover and let rise until doubled about 30 minutes. Bake at 375 degrees for 12-16 minutes or until golden brown. Remove from pans to wire racks to cool. Yield 2 dozen..

I promise no one will ever know this is a lighter version. What a deal! Good food and good for you.

This is a delicious stir fry, no sacrifice of flavor and you are eating lighter. Also uses some of the fresh garden vegetables.



PORK STIR FRY

3 tablespoons reduced sodium soy sauce
1 tablespoon lemon juice
1 teaspoon sugar
1 teaspoon cornstarch
1 teaspoon lemon pepper seasoning
1 teaspoon ground mustard
1 1/2 teaspoon Worcestershire sauce
1 pound pork tenderloin, cut into 1/4 inch strips
1 cup thinly sliced carrots
4 teaspoons canola oil, divided
1 cup thinly sliced zucchini
1/2 cup celery, sliced thin
2 cups fresh mushrooms, sliced thin
5 cups torn fresh spinach

In bowl combine first 7 ingredients, add pork and toss to coat. In a non-stick skillet or wok, stir fry carrots in 2 teaspoons oil for 2 minutes. Add zucchini and celery, stir fry for 2 minutes. Add mushrooms, stir fry for 2-3 minutes or until vegetables are crisp tender. Stir fry pork with marinade in remaining oil after you remove vegetables. Keep vegetables warm. When meat is no longer pink, return vegetables to pan. Add spinach and stir fry 1 to 2 minutes or until tender. Yields 4 servings.