



Flavour with Benefits

Small Changes,

BIG
Benefits

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Small Changes, Big Benefits.

Some recent health issues caused me to take a deeper look at the foods I was eating. Medications were not a consideration due to possible side effects and complications. Reading more on nutrition along with some online classes and in person classes, I began to realize how much there was to know about food and how little I really knew.

An open mind allows us to learn and with a willingness to change, we can achieve that which may seem unlikely, but it *is* possible. Knowing what you will *not* compromise is also important. For me, that was flavour. Flavour from a great meal is what we expect. Flavour with Benefits™ was born with this mission, a way to implement small changes in foods we eat and over time achieve big health benefit, keeping flavour at the forefront.

So, I decided to start with the beginning of each day. Breakfast - and a fresh start.

We'd been accustomed to "heartier" meals to kick off the day, sometimes accompanied by fruit and so on. What do I mean by hearty? Sometimes bacon and eggs with toast. Other times bagels with cream cheese and some yoghurt. You get the idea. All very tasty.

I did some research about the nutrition value of these typical breakfasts and noted that, depending on my other meals during the day, my family was off to a calorie and fat rich start to each day. Couple this with a hectic lifestyle running a business, other rich daily meals and intermittent exercise routines, waistlines were growing as were other negative health consequences.

Time for some small changes.

By just changing breakfast, I noticed my body was starting to look different. My weight was more stable and my blood work at the doctor was hitting normal numbers. We all love positive feedback, so I started weighing myself each morning. I wanted to see the effects of my changes. And it started to work. I was not really focused on my weight, but it came down and did not fluctuate as much.

How did I do it? The combination of oatmeal with two or more delicious "in season" fruits (bananas, apples, pears, blueberries, raspberries, pitted cherries, blackberries, kiwi) and a very slight sprinkling of nuts (sliced almonds, cashews, walnuts) or healthy granola, Maca and cinnamon were satisfying and filling. Add a slice of delicious whole wheat or sourdough bread and either a modest amount of nut butter or avocado – and breakfast was transformed.



For those of you that enjoy comparisons and numbers, here are a few tables to give some facts:

	Bagel and Cream Cheese + Fruit Flavoured Yoghurt with Orange Juice + Black Coffee	Oatmeal with Fruit and Whole Wheat Toast and Almond Butter with Black Coffee
Calories	753	412
Fat	14g	11g
Saturated Fat	9g	2g
Cholesterol	40mg	0mg
Carbohydrates	132g	74g
Fiber	5.7g	12.9g
Sugar	64g	27g
Sodium	898mg	158mg
Protein	21g	9.5g
Calcium	30mg	50mg

We all know that little things can often make the difference. These changes to breakfast were not dramatic but incremental. I kept insisting on great flavour with each one of these changes. It worked. Without great flavours, I'm sure we would have drifted back to the older and less healthy alternatives.

	Low Fat Unsweetened Dairy Yoghurt with Traditional Granola	Unsweetened Almond Yoghurt with Exotic Spicy Granola
Calories	426	347
Fat	17.6g	22.8g
Saturated Fat	4.1g	2.7g
Trans Fat	.1g	0g
Cholesterol	20mg	0mg
Carbohydrates	46.7g	26.4g
Fiber	5.4g	6.2g
Sugar	21.4g	4.1g
Sodium	66mg	25mg
Protein	22.9g	12.7g
Calcium	186g	85mg



The result was a decrease in typical calories by about 45% at breakfast; zero cholesterol, decreased sodium/salt and sugar, and a substantial decrease in carbohydrates along with a big increase in fiber. The one change that confused me in our new breakfast regimen was protein. It decreased by about 55%. Bad right? No, as it turns out we were getting too much protein throughout the day anyway, which then turns into excess weight, over time. Finally, top off the healthy improvements with more vitamins and minerals.

Then it was onto lunch and snacks. Trading chips for vegetables was another small change. Hummus was always a favourite, but with all that oil, big portions did not work. I modified the classic oil filled hummus and developed *Artichoke Hummus*. A flavourful healthy version of a classic snack. No worrying about calories now, more enjoyment and very nutritious.

Being a dip and sauce lover, I started making *Crudité with Dipping sauce*. Colourful. Surprisingly, I could not stop eating those vegetables with that cool fresh dip. No guilt and lots of crunchy goodness with satisfaction.

Next came experimenting with salads and combining lots of interesting ingredients. Shaking it up and adding kale to raspberries, potatoes and sweet potatoes, beet greens, and voila, *Crunchy Kale Cabbage Fennel Salad* was born. Then the salad dressing *had* to change. Working on tasty dressings that had no oil

and no sugar such as *Lavender Blueberry Salad Dressing*. Enjoy that salad and dressing because all the ingredients are nutritious. Healthy food can and does taste great.

Looking in the mirror now became easier. My waistline started to appear little by little.

This spurred me on to look at dinner and the evening snacks to see what I could do next. It turns out eating healthy soup such as *Leek Potato Onion Edamame Soup* before any meal lowered the amount I ate, by quite a bit. The fiber and water in the vegetables helped fill me up.

I became intrigued with other plant-based meal options. It was clear that rather than feeling limited on options, the choices were limited only by imagination. I realized that much-maligned vegetables such as a potato can become *Frites au Four* (Baked French Fries) and sweet potatoes can be transformed into *Sweet Potato Fries*. It was never the vegetables themselves that were the problem. It was the preparation method. The tradition of frying of these favourites made them unhealthy but with a simple change in cooking, they are back on the menu. Small changes in this area yielded big benefits in reduction of cholesterol, fat and saturated fats.

Being a cheese lover from my early days in France, it was non-negotiable to add this flavour to various savoury dishes. I stumbled upon nutritional yeast. Not your regular baker's yeast but a yellow nutty cheesy ingredient. Combining it with garlic, lemon and tamari brought about some surprising results. Recipes such as *Steamed Asparagus with "Cheese" Sauce* and *Cultured Cashew Cheese* gave me hope that I could still enjoy favourite flavours and be healthy too.

My dinners were now an occasional *Grilled Coffee Rub Ribeye Steak* but not nearly as often. By eating healthy carbs and fruits and vegetables for dinner, I found my desire to snack late into the evening diminished. I felt full and satisfied. Drinking the odd glass of champagne made the evening complete and special.

But let's not forget desserts. Oh no! Never sacrifice flavour or fun. The first crack at refining classic desserts meant using lower calorie substitutions such as yoghurt instead of cream cheese or cream. Big rewards on calories. Using plant-based sweetening options such as Monkfruit or dates instead of refined sugar started to be standard for my desserts including favourites like *Lemon Lavender Luxury Cheesecake*. Everyone enjoyed them. Maybe there was something to this.

Then I began wondering if some of these favourite desserts could be 100% plant based and oil free. To my surprise, a majority of my favourites were still possible to make. Substituting dairy, eggs and oil helped the nutrition and but the taste and enjoyment were still there. These include *Chocolate Mousse – Avocado Surprise*, brownies, *Gateau d'Arles* and even the must have *Classic Banana Bread*. I was thrilled because a life without any favourite foods, did not sound that great. Nope. Don't settle. Your food has to taste great too. Healthy foods do not have to be boring and tasteless.

These changes have been interesting and have taken time, but the results are noticeable and substantial. There have even some immediate economic benefits with plant based foods, such as plant based milks last a long time, so no need to throw out sour milk; buying more vegetables, less meat and cheese made a positive dent in my food budget. And one benefit that made me smile was raw cookie dough. Guess what? You can eat it without worry. No raw eggs.

But the most important changes are I have more energy, I feel I have some control in my life and over my life. I sleep better, have greater sexual vitality and I just feel good. There is a feeling of contentment and this allows me to take on the daily challenges, of which there are many.

These recipes are available in our upcoming book Flavour with Benefits, France which will be released mid 2021. There are many recipes on our website flavourwithbenefits.com You can share your thoughts under the recipes tab or [@bakingcuisinetravel](https://www.instagram.com/bakingcuisinetravel) on Instagram.

Enjoy!