

Staying Healthy

Kids help cookbook writer with 'Tasty Treats'

Recipes include healthy snacks children love

BY DOLORES FOX CIARDELLI

When cookbook maven Parisa Ambwani wanted to publish a volume of healthy recipes for children, "Enticing Tasty Treats," she decided to populate it with a cast of appealing characters — a monkey dubbed Chef Chew or Chewy, along with a cat, a parrot, a cow and a swan — at the Banana Mansion Culinary School.

"I made them chefs," Ambwani explained. "It's so cute. In the book there is a lot of story about these five characters."

She does not take all the credit for this fanciful romp through the kitchen. She had a team of consultants: Bay Area youngsters, including her own grandchildren, who live in Pleasanton. Some of them tasted her food and gave her feedback. Others made drawings and paintings to illustrate the book.

Ambwani has produced several other cookbooks, all focusing on nutritious recipes with fresh natural ingredients and each with a spiritual message. She promotes eating fresh produce, wholesome foods, whole grains and foods that reduce toxins.

In her latest book, she ties in the importance of family so including her two grandchildren in the project came naturally. It emphasizes nourishing young bodies and establishing good eating habits.

"Children have to learn from their parents," Ambwani said, encouraging parents to welcome offspring in the kitchen to prepare meals together.

"Cooking is like a language," she noted. "It is much easier to learn from childhood."

She planned "Enticing Tasty Treats" as a gift for parents and grandparents to use with their children. An early page focuses on safety in the kitchen: taking care with knives, peelers, appliances and ovens, and the proper handling of food.

"These recipes are for parents and children as co-participants, to work together as a team for cooking, sometimes even with young children's ideas," the introduction states. "This will give children more self-esteem about their cooking and teamwork. They can see and experience taste as the end results of their effort."

"Enticing Tasty Treats" includes a chart of food groups to show how our Wheel of Life is sustained by proper nutrition. In a section about snacks, Ambwani emphasizes that these mini-meals need to be packed with nutrients as well as made appealing to children, and that healthy snacks should be taken from all the food groups.

"Good eating habits will enhance your physical, mental and emotional condition; it will also enhance your spirit," Ambwani



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"Enticing Tasty Treats" has more than 150 recipes for families to prepare and enjoy together.

remembers her mother telling her as she was growing up in Iran.

Ambwani has published four other cookbooks, "Recipes from the Millennia," "Recipes from the Heart," "Seeds of Celestial Love and Peace" and "Human-Unity (Humanity)," which all contain her philosophy as well as wisdom about nutrition.

"Nourishment for the body and sustenance for the soul is the vast philosophy behind my writing," she explained.

Although the focus of "Enticing Tasty Treats" may be on children, the recipes are for everyone. Some of the more exotic ingredients, such as hickory liquid, Himalayan salt, almond meal, Arabic gum and chia seeds, as well as the tips and glossary, make the book an interesting read — and an inspiration to experiment with new ways to cook and eat healthy.

Ambwani will hold a book signing 12-2 p.m. Oct. 18 at Whole Foods in San Ramon.

For more information, visit www.enlightenedrecipes.com. ■

Wholesome Banana Cookies

- 2 medium-size ripe bananas, peeled, cut into small pieces
 - ½ teaspoon vanilla
 - 1 cup rolled oats, slightly toasted but uncooked
 - 1 teaspoon rice syrup
 - ¼ cup walnuts, coarsely crushed
- Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Line a cookie sheet with parchment paper. Place bananas in blender; run blender for 30 seconds until bananas are pureed. Place bananas in mixing bowl; add vanilla, rolled oats and rice syrup. Mix gently to make soft dough and fold in walnuts. Form dough into eight balls, place on cookie sheet. Bake cookies for 8-10 minutes or until toothpick inserted into center comes out clean. Remove from oven. Cool before serving.

—From "Enticing Tasty Treats"



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How much exercise do you really need?

Think of it as 'fun,' not work

So how much exercise do you need to do to lose weight? In terms of time, adults need at least 250 minutes of exercise per week – equal to 50 minutes of exercise five days a week – to lose significant weight, according to the latest recommendations from the American College of Sports Medicine (ACSM).

But what if you barely have time to squeeze in six hours of sleep? Here's what trainers -- and sports-medicine experts -- have realized: You don't have to do all 50 minutes in one stretch. In fact, you can do 20 or just 10 minutes increments during the day to reap some of the benefits, from losing weight to toning to reducing stress and clearing your mind.

One tip: Forget exercise; have "fun" instead: If the thought of the word exercise makes you cringe, banish it from your vocabulary. Substitute "activity" or even "fun activity."

Exercise definitely sounds like sweat and work.

"But when we think of 'activity,' it could be things we enjoy doing," says Fabio Comana, a San Diego exercise physiologist and spokesman for the American Council on Exercise. "You have options. It can be enjoyable activities with friends or with the family."

Hiking, biking, urban walks, or playing outdoor games are just a few activities that come to mind.

If you are trying to maintain your weight rather than lose, you will likely still be successful with 30-minute workouts five days per week. The ACSM recommends that adults participate in at least 150 minutes per week of moderate-intensity physical activity to prevent significant weight gain. Overweight and obese

adults, however, are more likely to reach their goals with at least 250 minutes total exercise time per week. Strength training is also recommended as part of the exercise regimen, in order to increase muscle tissue (which burns more calories at rest) and further reduce health risks.

Weight management affects most Americans. More than 66% of U.S. adults are either overweight or obese. People can reduce their risk for chronic diseases with as little as a 2% to 3% reduction in excess body weight. Implementing exercise and proper eating habits can help many people achieve a healthy weight.

Hard to get started? Don't get hung up on the length of each workout. Instead, focus on exercising on most days of the week, especially when you are beginning or resuming an exercise program.

If you get into a pattern of daily exercise, it's easy to increase it. The focus at first is to "show up," to do some exercise or activity most days of the week. The hardest part of increasing physical activity is simply getting started, and it's a good idea to make a deal with yourself. If you plan to exercise on a particular day, no matter how you feel when that day comes around, promise yourself you will put on your exercise clothes and do at least five minutes.

Most people are surprised that when they do this, they get in more exercise. Once you get started it is easier to keep going, and it's easier to increase the amount of time once you are in the habit of every day or every other day. ■

—BistroMD



BRANDPOINT

The prominence of smartphones and other devices has contributed to the evolution of a relatively modern affliction called nomophobia, the pathological fear of remaining out of touch with technology.

Nomophobia: When a modern smartphone affliction leads to addiction

Everyday technology consumes more and more people's lives as the phone, computer, tablet and other high tech devices have become not just an object, but also a close companion.

And for those who are extremely connected to their devices, going without them, even for only a few minutes, can be an anxiety-filled experience.

A majority of American adults (56%) own smartphones, according to a recent study by the Pew Research Center. Having the ability to check your email, play games and browse the Internet right in your pocket is a leap forward for technology and staying connected to the workplace. But it may come at a cost.

Nomophobia, or the pathological fear of remaining out of touch with technology, is a relatively modern affliction.

It's basically a side effect from changes the mobile phone has made to human habits, behaviors and even the way we perceive reality. Entire relationships are becoming defined through mobile texting and colorful little emoticons, from saying "I love you" to "I think we should move on."

So how did it come to this? Have smartphones become an extension of Americans or is everyone simply becoming victims of a fast-paced, always connected society? Chances are it's a little bit of both.

Dr. Chuck Howard, licensed psychologist and chair of the psychology programs at Argosy University, Denver, believes it can be more complex than simply stamping a label on the problem.

"Nomophobia is a result of people becoming more and more electronically connected to the point that their technology-based network and relationships become their home community," Howard said. "Losing that connection is essentially a

form of electronic banishment. They fear being tossed out of, or losing their 'social village.'"

The term was originally coined from a 2010 study by YouGov, a United Kingdom-based research organization that wanted to look at anxieties suffered by mobile phone users. The study found that men and women often felt stressed when their mobile phones were turned off.

"Nomophobia can be a symptom of a potential addiction," Howard said. "Users who are happy and having a good time when on their device, then face great stress and anxiety without it. They may obsess about it. They can't put it down. This is when actual addiction becomes a threat."

When you see a behavior becoming destructive, and admit to having a problem, you can handle it in the same way as other types of addiction. "Develop strategies for meeting your social needs in other ways ... without depending on an electronic platform," Howard suggested.

Start by resisting the urge to constantly check your phone. Try limiting your number of mobile social media networks and consider joining more in-person professional networking groups or sports clubs. Set aside some time to leave your phone alone, such as at dinner, with friends or going to sleep.

If it becomes an addiction and begins to strain your relationships, consider asking others around you what they think. Be open to a sort of intervention where friends and family may candidly tell you their thoughts.

No need to go cold-turkey, just take some small steps at a time to disconnect and enjoy the world around you, without looking through a smartphone screen. And lastly if you can't do it alone, then seek professional help. ■

—Brandpoint



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Why you need those Zs, and how to get more of them

Getting enough sleep doesn't have to be a dream

Lack of sleep is not a joke.

Not getting enough sleep starves your body of its natural ability to reinvigorate itself. If you didn't get a lot of sleep the night before, chances are that you're going to be cranky and groggy throughout the day.

And unfortunately, sleep can affect more than just your mood. Lack of sleep can affect your sex life, memory retention, health, looks and especially your ability to lose weight.

Lack of sleep, lack of focus

Lack of sleep causes a lack of focus. Forget about will power. If you're sleep-deprived, your body will not be able to focus.

Lack of sleep was the cause behind these major incidents: the 1979 nuclear accident at Three Mile Island; the massive Exxon Valdez oil spill; and the 1986 nuclear meltdown at Chernobyl.

Lack of sleep doesn't just cause major accidents around the world. It's a big public safety concern because drowsiness can slow reaction time as much as driving drunk. The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration estimates that fatigue is a cause in 100,000 auto crashes and 1,550 crash-related deaths a year in the U.S. This problem appears greatest among people younger than 25.

Lack of sleep, lack of brain function

Lack of sleep impairs your cognitive functions as well. It impairs attention, alertness, concentration, reasoning and problem-solving. This makes it hard to be present in normal everyday activities like going to work or school, or hanging out with friends and family.

Also, during the night, various sleep cycles play a role in "solidifying" memories within the mind. If you don't get enough sleep, that's not going to happen. So when you feel sleep deprived, it will be harder to remember what you did during the day.

Lack of sleep, lack of health

Chronic lack of sleep can put you at risk for these health concerns:

- Heart disease
- Heart attack
- Heart failure
- Irregular Heartbeat
- High blood pressure
- Diabetes

According to some estimates, about 90% of people with insomnia also have another corresponding health condition, like depression.

Lack of sleep is depressing

Over time, lack of sleep can contribute to symptoms of depression.

The most common sleep disorder — insomnia — has the strongest link to depression, which isn't surprising because it's often one of the first symptoms of depression. In fact, in a 2007 study of 10,000 people, those with insomnia were five times as likely to develop depression as those without insomnia.

Insomnia and depression feed off of each other. Depression can keep you up at night and sleep loss will often aggravate the symptoms of depression, creating a vicious cycle.

Lack of sleep, old skin

When you don't get enough sleep, your body releases more of the stress hormone, cortisol. Cortisol is a hormone released in response to stress and a low level of blood glucose within the body. When released in excess amounts, cortisol can break down skin collagen, the protein that keeps skin smooth

and elastic so you don't wake up the next morning with sallow skin and puffy eyes or dreaded dark circles under the eyes.

Lack of sleep, lack of memory

In 2009, American and French researchers determined that brain events called "sharp wave ripples" were responsible for consolidating memory. The ripples also transferred learned information from the one area of the brain to another, where long-term memories are stored. Sharp wave ripples occur mostly during the deepest levels of sleep. If you're not getting enough sleep then you're missing out on long-term memory retention.

Lack of sleep, increase in weight

Lack of sleep is related to an increase in hunger and appetite and possibly, to obesity. Lack of sleep not only stimulates your appetite, but it also makes you crave high-fat and high-carb foods. This is problematic if you're trying to lose weight.

According to a 2004 study, people who sleep less than six hours a day were almost 30% more likely to become obese than those who slept for seven to nine hours.

Lack of sleep, lack of judgment

Lack of sleep can affect our interpretation of events as well. This hurts our ability to make sound judgments because we may not assess situations accurately and act on them wisely. Also, sleep deprived people often misjudge the effects of lack of sleep. So if you're not sleeping enough, pay close attention to the next section so you can take advantage of those Zs.

How you can get more sleep

In today's fast paced society, getting enough sleep seems like a dream. But it doesn't have to be.

- **Keep track of your time.** Stop puttering around. We all need down time, but we don't need endless hours of it. If it's 1 a.m. and you're still relaxing from that stressful day at work, it may be a good idea to take a look at your priorities.
- **No more late-night TV.** Television is designed to keep you up at night so don't feel bad if you often find yourself glued to the TV late at night. However, if your favorite show is on past your bedtime, record it and enjoy it the next day after you get home from work. It will be much more enjoyable to watch it when you're more alert after a productive day.
- **In fact, turn everything off.** Make a rule to turn off your electronic devices at the same time every night. Those calls can wait until morning and those Facebook notifications will still be there the next day. And checking your email late at night won't give you any peace of mind either.
- **Find a routine and stick to it.** Try to be in bed seven to eight hours before your alarm goes off and plan your night out accordingly.
- **Don't clean before bedtime.** The house does not need to be cleaned before you go to sleep. It may give you some peace of mind, but in the long run, you're just depriving yourself of that much needed sleep.
- **Exercise earlier in the day.** Try to work out at least four hours before bed. If you wait any longer, your body temperature will still be too high, keeping you awake. Working out soothes insomnia-fueled stress and eventually lowers your body's built-in thermostat, a necessary step to getting some shut eye. ■

—BistroMD

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