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SENIOR SCAPE: Has food lost its allure?

By Sylvia Dickens

One problem often experienced by seniors is loss of appetite.
This is especially true for those who live alone. Fixing a meal becomes a chore rather than a pleasure. When you are cooking just for yourself, it doesn't seem so important.
You might tend to opt for foods that are easy to prepare. Perhaps you're in a rut, eating the same few foods every day, month after month.
There is no stimulus to eat.
Why would there be when it'll just be the same old thing?

Causes
People tend to lose their appetites because of the drugs they must take. Certain drugs mask the taste buds. Some people lose their sense of smell which means they cannot taste food. Imagine not being able to smell or taste food, when both stimulate the appetite.
If you can't smell and taste food, it's not always easy finding foods that satisfy.
Fortunately, some can trigger hunger. Fruit, for one. Peaches and oranges are juicy and tasty, plus they stimulate the stomach acids which, in turn, can cause those pangs for food.
Sometimes, it's about more than food choices. It's about food preparation.
I have my favorite meals because I like them and because they're quick and easy: cheese for lunch. hamburger, spaghetti, or some frozen dish for dinner. And, of course, lots of sugar in between. All-in-all, a very bad diet.

Solutions
A few weeks back, it became evident that it was time to improve my energy levels and help minimize any potential health issues while making meals more enticing.
The research suggested a variety of produce that harbor certain nutrients and a switch from fatty foods to beans and other protein-rich items.
Do you know that your body needs five servings of fresh fruit and veggies per day? Their nutrients protect the heart and blood vessels. The anti-oxidants work to prevent blocked arteries and ultimately ward off cardiovascular disease.
Food preparation, for me, was always a chore. Each mealtime was met with disinterest. Suddenly, I had a new outlook. I made it fun. Here's how.
I purchased a new electric kettle (what a change from my cheap aluminum stovetop version), a new mini-coffee maker (it's really cute), a big steamer pot, and a veggie chopper (what fun!).
Suddenly, preparing food was exciting. I couldn't wait, so the next thrill was searching the produce aisle at the grocers for items I seldom eat: peppers, celery, spinach and the like.
That night, I chopped up red peppers, celery, mushrooms and spinach, added them to some hamburger, dropped in some macaroni elbows and put cheese on top.
The result was an absolutely delicious, super-tasty meal that lasted three days. It was better than my usual hamburger mixture. The steamed veggies on alternate days were equally delicious, and much more nutritious than cooking them in water or in the microwave.
The salads were tasty, too, with Boston lettuce (rather than head or romaine lettuce), apples (it's a while since I had these), red peppers (usually green), onion, black olives with Thousand Islands Dressing (a surprising alternative to Caesar) and feta cheese (a welcome change from cheddar or marble).
If you're wondering what happened to your appetite, consider that it just might be your routine. Try making some changes, from the cookware to the food choices. Make it interesting. Experiment. You just might surprise yourself. And here's another tip. Find recipes that make two to three servings so you can save leftovers for another day.
On days when your leftovers are gone and you still don't feel like cooking, eat out at a pleasant but affordable restaurant. Step back in time at Wimpey's, for example. They make a yummy lime float (remember those?).
Better yet, enjoy a delicious Budget Bistro Luncheon at the Aurora Seniors' Centre any Wednesday. Companionship has an amazing effect on appetite.

Mardi Gras Merriment

The first time the Centre ran this event, it was phenomenally popular. Everyone had a fantastic time. On Friday, April 11, organizers will present their third Night of Dixie/Mardi Gras event, featuring a live Dixieland band, dancing and refreshments in a lively atmosphere. There will be a cash bar throughout the evening. The whole town is invited but you must get your $10 advance tickets now. They sell out fast so don't wait.

Imagine lively jazz music, beads, masks and a New Orleans spectacle and you have the fun of Mardi Gras. Dress is semi-formal or as formal as you like. For those of you who want to really get into the mood, costumes are encouraged, but not necessary. All ages are welcome.