

Go with What You Know

January 2016

After indulging—or overindulging—during the holidays, eating fruits and vegetables can be a great way to reset your body and get back to a healthier lifestyle.

No one would call me a vegetarian, but fruits and vegetables are the primary part of my diet. And how could they not? In St. Pete, premium quality fruits and vegetables are in abundance—even at your local gas station. Plus, they are easier on your body, your waistline, and your wallet (this also comes as a benefit after the holidays). Even though I still crave gummy bears or my favorite oatmeal raisin cookie in January, I instead grab an apple or a handful of grapes or carrots to satisfy my sugary cravings.

Eating fruit is a good tactic to transition away from refined sugars to natural sugars. None of those slices of fruitcake over the holidays were likely filled with natural fruit sugars. Being in the Sunshine State, we are fortunate to have great fruit year round—and not only citrus. If you aren't sure exactly what that star-looking thing is or what you are actually supposed to do with a pomegranate, that's okay! Go with what you know. Better to choose those plump strawberries, a juicy pear or even a simple ripe banana than that candy bar calling your name in the checkout line.

Sometimes, not only choosing but also preparing fruits and vegetables can seem daunting, but it doesn't have to be. Go with what you know—and remember to have a little fun. Cooking at home is all about experimentation and investigating to learn what you like. Not every great recipe or dish was invented from a chef (and, in fact, most weren't!). Here are a few tips to help you make the next great dish.

There are many vegetables to choose from at the market, but going with what you know can save a lot of time and tension in the produce section—and don't spend too much time searching for the perfect recipe. Again, go with what flavors you know and like, but don't be scared to try new combinations to make the dish your own. Not every dish has to be steamed broccoli. Next time, try it tossed in your favorite vinaigrette and roast it. If you're feeling a little bolder, try it with Brussels sprouts—you'll never go back to mushy boiled ones again! Using flavors you can find already located in your cupboard or fridge not only ensures you will like your dish, but it's economical too. Who among us has not shopped to make a recipe and found ourselves spending an extra \$20 or \$30 more than we intended?

Now, all of this mix and match cookery may not sound appetizing to some of the foodies out there, but this is how cooks become chefs—and besides, you are cooking for yourself and your family. And it's just a starting point. Next time, try that unusual sounding root vegetable you never really could figure out what to do with!

Eating and cooking healthily can be confusing these days with fad diets and the latest magazine telling you what to eat. Just keep it simple and go with what you know!

Jeffrey Jew
Stillwaters Tavern