



## Nutrition Nibbles

### Book Club: The Kind Diet

For better or for worse, when Oprah talks people listen... especially when it comes to health, nutrition, and dieting. Over the past few months, Oprah has profiled several different nutrition-related books for the consumer. Many people ask me what I think of her picks—how credible they are, do they make sense, and most importantly, do they contain the “magic map” to a healthier, fitter, slimmer body? This summer I will take a look at 3 of her recent health reads and give you the skinny on the scoop.

First up this month: [The Kind Diet: A Simple Guide to Feeling Great, Losing Weight, and Saving the Planet](#) by Alicia Silverstone. That’s right, the vegan actress turned nutrition-guru, Alicia Silverstone. From page one, you get a sense of the author’s passion for both vegetarian and vegan diets. She promotes this lifestyle for a variety of reasons: as a way to end animal suffering, to help people tread lightly on the earth’s natural resources, and as a path to slim down and improve overall health. A

vegetarian or vegan diet can potentially deliver on all of these promises, however, this guide book is not as easy a route as it seems.

Dropping most, if not all, animal foods from one’s diet and still ending up with a convenient, balanced meal plan may not be plausible for the masses. The author encourages shaping up one’s eating habits by following any of three plans or moving stepwise through them: flirting, going vegan, or becoming a superhero.

“Flirting” asks that you be open to possibilities by doing what a lot of dietitians request: changing from refined grains to whole grains, switching from corn oil to olive oil, and moving from canned vegetables to fresh ones. However, the author also asks that you ditch cow’s milk and try out a dairy alternative, scout out vegetarian restaurants in your area, stock up on processed vegetarian foods including frozen meals, veggie burgers, and tofu dogs, as well as take a yoga class, and avoid beef, chicken and pork for four weeks.

### College Corner: Summer Break

With another school year coming to an end and summer right around the corner, *now* is the perfect time to **reboot** your nutritional **hard drive** so to speak and **refresh** your palate. Here’s how:

**1 Shutdown** unhealthy habits that crept up over the semester. Put an end to late night fast food runs, subsisting on processed convenience foods, and quenching your thirst with calorie-filled beverages.

**2 Autocorrect** your system by stocking up on satisfying snacks like fresh fruits, chopped veggies, nuts, string cheese, low fat yogurt, whole grain crackers, and hummus.

**3 Find** your stove and **replace** your microwave. Instead of zapping a frozen meal for dinner, create a quick and nutritious supper the speed-scratch way. Stir-fry some chicken and vegetables and serve over rice or brown some ground turkey, combine with marinara sauce and veggies, and pour over pasta.

**4 Reformat** your beverage intake. This summer,

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## The Kind Diet continued...

“Going vegan” involves more of a commitment. At this stage, not only have you eliminated “nasty foods” (meat, dairy, sugar, and processed foods) from your diet, you also add in “kind foods” (whole grains, protein alternatives particularly beans, vegetables, and dessert—yes, your read right, dessert!). On her vegan plan, meals consist of a whole grain food or product, some protein, raw and cooked veggies, and dessert (which could include fruit). She also encourages chewing your food at least 30 times in order to extract the most nutrients from it (isn’t that what your digestive tract is for?) This phase promises to jump-start the fun process of detoxifying your body. Hmmm...

“Becoming a superhero” is the most extreme phase of her plan and claims to “cleanse [your body] from the inside out.” (p.97) It is somewhat based on the macrobiotic diet, which focuses on local, seasonal, whole foods paired to obtain a Zen-like balance.

Whole grains are emphasized, processed foods are eliminated, nightshade vegetables (potatoes, tomatoes, eggplant, and peppers) are avoided, soy is reduced, and “magic foods” such as miso, umeboshi plums, pickles, and sea vegetables are sprinkled in. Unfortunately, the author strongly discourages fruit intake and the use of herbs and spices to flavor foods in this stage.

While this book has its high points—focusing on whole foods, home cooking, exercise for enjoyment—it also has its lows, including its emphasis on expensive foods that are hard to find and its use of scare tactics and un-validated health claims to persuade people to change their diets. Rather than using this book as a cure-all, readers are better off carefully picking and selectively choosing The Kind Diet tips, recipes, and strategies that safely and soundly fit into their own lives and diets.

## College Corner continued...

stay hydrated with good ol’ water. Spice it up with a twist of lime or a sprig of mint.

**5** Choose an international theme for summer. If you’re traveling abroad, awaken your palate and stretch your senses by embracing the local diet and eating customs. Staying put? Do a little research and choose a cuisine you’d like to explore. Gather recipes and create a different worldly-meal each week.

**6** Insert a new page into your summer plans by testing out a new health habit. Experiment in the kitchen with an unusual ingredient from the grocery store, attempt a different type of physical exercise, or have a go at growing a garden. Get creative!

**7** Track your changes over the next three months and see just how much your health, diet, and attitude have progressed. This will also keep you from going into sleep mode and completely checking-out from your body this summer!

Enjoy your time off!

### Favorite Food

Lots of people are curious about what dietitians eat when they are “off-duty.” I have been enjoying this yummy season of strawberries. Bright red with green seeds, plump with juicy sweetness (is your mouth watering yet?), strawberries make a great addition

to your morning cereal, snack time yogurt, a lunchtime peanut butter sandwich, or an evening salad. Blend them in a smoothie or just eat them by themselves, each cup of strawberries offers a tasty dose of vitamin C, 50 calories, and 3 grams of fiber. Mm mm mm...