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THIS MONTH'S TOPIC

break out of your diet rut

Easy ways to spice up your daily meals
and still meet your slim-down goals. BY SHARON LIAO

There's
always
room for
dessert

ask the expert

THE UPSIDE OF A ROUTINE

Experts agree that *some* structure is crucial. We asked Los Angeles nutrition coach Jackie Keller to spell out when to settle into a pattern and when to switch it up.

➤ **When is it important to have structure?** When you're starting a plan. It takes about 90 days to adopt a new habit. So during that time, it's a good idea to have specific goals about exercising and eating.

➤ **So does that mean you should eat the same things every day?** Not necessarily—that's what can lead to boredom. A better strategy is to focus on eating around the same *times* each day to keep your energy levels and metabolism revved up. One Swedish study found that women at a healthy weight were less likely to skip breakfast and lunch than obese women were.

➤ **What if something unexpected pops up, like a business dinner?** If you know you'll miss your usual Spin class, wake up 30 minutes earlier and do a workout DVD. And set ground rules in advance. Say, "I'll have a glass of wine, but I'm going to skip the bread basket."

3 SURPRISING WAYS TO BOOST MOTIVATION

Remember how fired up you were when you first decided to eat healthy or drop a few pounds? Whether that determination has just dimmed a little or nearly petered out, these tricks will help you stay on track.

1 Be realistic You might dream of having Cameron Diaz's svelte body, but being too ambitious may only set you up for feelings of frustration and failure, says Melainie Rogers, R.D., a dietitian in New York City. Instead of aiming for a certain weight (or a certain look), she suggests setting small, measurable weekly goals, such as eating protein at every meal.

2 Change your focus Women who had an altruistic reason for losing weight (for example, staying healthy for their children) were more likely to succeed than those whose motivation was purely personal (like wanting to shape up for a high-school reunion), according to one study.

3 Factor in favorites Regular treats keep you from feeling deprived, says Rogers. Allow yourself a 100- to 200-calorie indulgence a day.



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