

The Comeback Queen's Guide to Healthy Eating



Disclaimer: *The Comeback Queen is not a nutritionist or dietitian, but I've struggled with weight and food issues my entire life. From being called "pleasingly plump" by my grandmother to being referred to as "Marsha Marshmallow" by the boys next door, I've lived up to these mantras for more of my life than I care to admit. Even as the Comeback Queen, I still see Marsha Marshmallow in the mirror from time to time.*

I'm an emotional eater who too often used food to soothe my soul with the results showing on my hips. Being brought up in the era of the clean plate club, hearing about the starving children in China, and knowing that dessert was a reward for cleaning my plate, I learned to eat everything that was put in front of me. I didn't know that I was supposed to listen to my body and I certainly didn't know how. In my family, love and appreciation was demonstrated by asking for seconds or even thirds.

We can survive by eating almost any type of food. But if we want to thrive, we must become conscious of what we are putting in our mouths, how often we eat, and the quality of the ingredients we use. As we age, this becomes even more critical.

We can survive by eating almost any type of food. But if we want to thrive, we must become conscious of what we are putting in our mouths, how often we eat, and the quality of the ingredients we use.

No one can dictate how you should eat, that's your decision, but please give some serious thought to how you fuel your engine. I find when I power my body with healthy unprocessed food, I feel and look better. My skin glows, my gut is happy, and I have more energy and greater focus to do what I need in my daily life.

1. **Tune In:** Start slowly by listening to your body. How? By paying attention to how you feel before and after every meal. Listening to your body is important, and not only that, listening to your body is infinitely wise. Ask yourself these questions and listen carefully to your responses.
 - a. Before you eat a meal, rate your level of hunger on a scale of 1 to 5 (with 1 being “not hungry” and 5 being “ravenous”) and ask yourself:
 - Am I eating because I'm hungry or because it's “time” to eat?
 - Is the food that I am about to eat fuel or comfort food?
 - If it's comfort food, what emotion am I feeling? Is there another way that I can soothe my soul (taking a walk, drinking a cup of tea or coffee or a glass of wine, reading a good book, meditating etc.)?
 - b. After your meal, rate your level of satiation on a scale of 1 to 5 (with 1 being “satisfied” and 5 being “uncomfortably stuffed”) and ask yourself:
 - Do I need or do I want more food?
 - Did this meal satisfy me? If not, what's missing?
 - Did this meal give me the physical energy and mental focus I need right now?
 - How happy or unhappy is my gut?
2. **Get Unprocessed:** Consider getting processed food out of your house. Processed foods contain high levels of sugar often hidden in the list of ingredients such as corn syrup, glucose, fructose, and maltodextrin to name a few. Based on the obesity rates in this country, the processed food manufacturers are quite successful with their

marketing and product development endeavors. A study just released by the National Institute of Health confirms that eating highly processed foods results in weight gain. [Click here to listen](#). Do yourself, your family, and your body a favor and replace processed food with natural or homemade versions of those foods. Here are a few of my unprocessed swaps:

- a. Replace instant oatmeal with steel cut oats or overnight oats. Make a pot of steel cut oats (1 cup oat to 4 cups water; bring to a boil and simmer for 30 minutes). Cool, refrigerate and reheat for a quick breakfast or side dish. Overnight oats are made from old-fashioned oats, milk or milk substitute and the fruits, spices and toppings of your choice. Cover and let soak overnight – in the morning, you'll enjoy a nutritious and filling breakfast treat
- b. Replace breakfast cereal with homemade granola and plain or vanilla yogurt, add fresh or frozen fruit for sweetness.
- c. Replace store bought peanut butter with homemade – Blend roasted, salted peanuts in a food processor until smooth (this will take several minutes). Sweeten to taste (start with 1 tsp of sugar, honey or another sweetener). Keep the peanut butter refrigerated and the oil won't separate. Note: you can make other nut butters using the same method.
- d. Make your own fruit topping to use on oatmeal or pancakes by simmering a bag of frozen fruit (strawberries, blueberries and raspberries are ideal) for 10 minutes with several dashes of cinnamon. Sweeten with maple syrup.
- e. Replace sugar-free or low-calorie snacks with real ones – try fresh or frozen fruits, a handful of nuts or seeds, or fresh vegetables and hummus
- f. Replace white or wheat bread with sprouted grain bread
- g. Replace white rice with brown rice, faro, or quinoa.

3. **Banish Sugar:** Get white sugar out of the house. Once you stop eating white sugar, you will find that your desire for sugar diminishes and when you indulge, the sweetness will be exaggerated greatly.

- a. Eliminate sugary desserts and eat fruit instead
- b. Serve berries with cool whip and cinnamon
- c. Learn how to use sugar substitutes like erythritol (natural sugar alcohol), stevia, and monk fruit
- d. Treat yourself with sugar-free desserts – My favorite is chocolate mug cake: mix together 2 tbsp cocoa powder, 2 tbsp erythritol, 2 tbsp egg whites, dash of salt, dash of vanilla, ¼ tsp baking soda. Microwave for 1 minute at 50% power. Top with 1 tbsp heavy cream, fresh berries or low sugar preserves. Enjoy!
- e. Swap out diet soda and drink tap or sparkling water with lemon.

4. **Eat at Home:** Consider eating at home more often. Work up to eating at home five nights a week focusing on healthy proteins, fresh fruits and vegetables and healthy fats. Restaurant portions are double or triple of what we need to eat. On top of that, chain restaurants serve foods engineered with salt and sugar to make them more palatable and to entice us to overeat. Here are a few tips to get started:
- a. Create simple, 30-minute go to meals like these:
 - i. grilled chicken with lemon & rosemary; baked sweet potatoes and steamed broccoli
 - ii. baked salmon topped with a mixture of mayonnaise, dill, garlic powder and minced shallot or onion powder; roasted asparagus (lay spears on a try lined with parchment, sprinkle with olive oil, salt & pepper); salad with berries, goat cheese & balsamic dressing
 - iii. turkey burgers, sweet potato “fries” (slice into ¼” rounds, spray with cooking spray, season with salt, pepper, garlic, paprika and bake at 400 degrees – turn ½ way through cooking and spray and season 2nd side); shredded Brussel sprouts – sautéed in a mix of butter & olive oil; seasoned with salt & pepper – cook then drizzle with maple syrup and balsamic vinegar
 - iv. Italian chicken sausage stir fry: sauté onions, peppers, zucchini and mushrooms; add chopped garlic, sliced chicken sausage; add fresh spinach – season with basil, oregano, salt & pepper; serve with grated parmesan
 - b. Cut up lettuce and keep it in a plastic bin as a basis for quick salads
 - c. Make vegetable soup – sauté onions, peppers, celery, carrots, zucchini and mushrooms; then add chicken broth; thyme, salt and pepper. To make minestrone soup add a parmesan cheese rind, 1 can drained black or cannellini beans and 1 can diced tomatoes – replace the thyme with oregano and basil
 - d. Treat yourself to fruit parfaits – layer cool whip in a wide rimmed glass with berries – repeat layers ending with berries on top. Feel free to add cinnamon
 - e. Roasted vegetables are delicious and easy. Cut vegetables in large chunks, drizzle with olive oil, sprinkle with salt and pepper. Roast at 400 for 20 minutes, stirring halfway through.
 - f. Make chili in large batches, freeze in serving size containers. Add extra vegetables to your chili such as chunks of zucchini, mushrooms, and spinach.

5. Order Healthy: Learn how to order healthy meals when eating out. Eating out is a treat and you should enjoy it without feeling guilty. Here are a few of my favorite restaurant tips:

- a. Review the menu on-line before you go to plan out your meal
- b. Order an appetizer (such as mussels, meatballs, or shrimp cocktail) and a salad as your meal
- c. Order a small steak, steamed vegetable and sweet potato
- d. Order grilled fish, steamed vegetables and brown rice
- e. Skip the bread basket or ask the server to take it off the table. Similarly skip the chips and salsa at Mexican restaurants.

Learn how to order healthy meals when eating out.

- f. Order a cup of soup (broth based) or a small side salad as a starter
- g. Order a salad or cup of soup and share the entrée or ask for a doggie bag. When your meal arrives, put half in the container before you start eating.
- h. Swap starchy sides for steamed vegetables
- i. Ask for lemon wedges and drizzle the juice on baked potatoes or steamed vegetables
- j. Order a salad and add steak, grilled shrimp, grilled salmon or grilled chicken to make a meal
- k. Ask for salad with no croutons and dressing on the side. Dip your fork in the dressing then fill your fork with salad.
- l. Avoid ordering items that are fried, breaded, creamy, buttery, stuffed or smothered. Likewise, steer away from foods that are au gratin, parmesan, cheese-filled, or scalloped.
- m. Choose to eat local: locally grown food and locally owned restaurants.

6. Holidays & Party Strategies:

- a. Eat before you go...have a small nutritious snack before you head to a party.
- b. Decide, in advance, how you will handle foods that “talk” to you.
- c. Bring snacks you will eat like a vegetable tray and dip
- d. Take a small portion of that special holiday food and give yourself permission to indulge. Eat it slowly and savor every bite.
- e. Forgive yourself when you fall off the wagon... and then get back on quickly

Need help and support to make your comeback? Contact me at marsha@comebackqueen.life to schedule a complimentary 30-minute consultation. To learn even more, visit comebackqueen.life and pick up a copy of my book, *Surviving and Thriving Despite the Drama*.

— Marsha

