

BLUE ZONES

“A woman's health is her capital.” – Harriet Beecher Stowe

Cooking at home means healthy meals and family connections

Robin DeMattia
Special to Naples Daily News
USA TODAY NETWORK – FLORIDA

Staying at home for much of this year has meant more people are cooking and eating at home, and that has led to many benefits.

According to a Food Industry Association survey, 71 percent of people who have been eating more in-person meals say they “feel more connected to my family since the pandemic has started.”

In addition, more than one-third are eating better, and 40 percent say their food is more balanced or healthier.

These outcomes tie directly to two of the Blue Zones Power of nine lifestyle habits: eating with a Plant Slant, and putting Loved Ones First.

“One of the silver linings from the pandemic has been people focusing on nutrition,” said Deb Logan, executive director for Blue Zones Project Southwest Florida. “We encourage eating well and connecting with family as ways to live longer, healthier, happier lives.”

In Blue Zones areas around the world, people eat less meat and more vegetables, beans and legumes. These foods are healthier than meats because they are less calorie-dense and contain less fat and sodium.

Eating well has long-term impacts on quality of life.

According to MyPlate (choosemyplate.gov), run by the U.S. Department of Agriculture, around half of American adults have one or more chronic diseases that are often tied to their poor eating habits.

The tips from this site include:

- Focus on variety, amount, and nutrition.
- Drink and eat less sodium, saturated fat, and added sugars.
- Make half your plate fruits and vegetables that you vary.
- Make half your grains whole grains.
- Move to low-fat and fat-free milk or yogurt.

Get Cooking!

Blue Zones cooking classes are held and archived online:
BlueZonesProjectSWFL.Eventbrite.com

Blue Zones offers hundreds of healthy recipes: bluezones.com/recipes

Cancer Alliance of Naples will start cooking classes again in mid-November. Register to receive information. Find archived classes on the organization's Facebook page and YouTube channel: cancerallianceofnaples.org

STARability posts cooking demonstration videos weekly on its Facebook page: starability.org

Find local farmer's markets, farms with on-site stands, farms providing delivery, and Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) farms, some with half price offers for EBTs: localharvest.org

- Start with small changes to build healthier eating styles.

Blue Zones Project Southwest Florida offers online cooking classes that present enticing plant-based recipes. Recent classes have featured tomato bruschetta, sauteed broccoli rabe, orange salad, and stuffed artichokes.

The main Blue Zones website is a great site to find recipes like roasted tomato and artichoke pesto pasta, easy Pad Thai, mushroom goulash and even desserts like chocolate fondue.

Two local organizations also help southwest Florida residents eat well by providing free online cooking classes and videos.

Cancer Alliance of Naples (CAN) presents the Food for Life program, which was created by the Physicians Committee for Responsible Medicine (PCRM) and is run by certified instructors.

“Research has shown that there is a direct link between plant-based nutri-

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